

PREMATURE LABOUR?

**A reflexive appraisal of one young teacher's journey into first
time motherhood and her return to teaching.**

Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements of the University of Chester for the
degree of Doctor of Education

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I declare that the material being presented for examination in this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted for an award at this or another Higher Education Institution.

Elaine P. McCarthy

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Dedication

For my darling husband, Martin

(1958-2016)

Thank you for your computer skills, your proof reading and your infinite patience and encouragement; for being my past, my present and my future –my love for you is

eternal x

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Abstract

This Ethnographic/Autoethnographic study reflects in rich detail a young teacher's life as she navigates the changing landscape of her first pregnancy, the birth of her child and her subsequent return to work as a full-time teacher. Using data which has been collected from a personal journal which she kept throughout the eighteen month period of the study, it examines the practical and emotional challenges which she faced, and the commitment, self-sacrifice and dedication required of her for the continuation and advancement of her career. By combining her data with observed field notes, semi-constructed interviews and reflexive narrative, I have been able to offer a holistic and balanced account of her experience and expose the complexities of motherhood today and the impact they have on a woman's life choices and professional decision making. My study revealed how this new mother faced a myriad of decisions and dilemmas, decisions, which ultimately impacted on her emotional well-being, and her power and identity as a woman, a wife, a daughter and a professional teacher. Its findings suggest that notwithstanding the historical political and legislative policies which have been implemented, in reality, little has changed since my own experience of being a working mother some thirty years ago. It recommends that if the increase in working mothers is to continue to rise, more must be done, both culturally and institutionally to alleviate the physical and emotional pressures which currently only serve to exacerbate the guilt and stress which appear to be an innate characteristic of the maternal condition. It concludes by recommending that working mothers need to harness "their strengths, their ability to learn, their confidence and joy in their work –[because this is] all part of being a woman now, [it is] part of [their] female identity" (Friedan, 1963, p.331), and rather than accepting motherhood as being a moderating factor, they should allow it to become an influence for further personal and professional growth and liberation, so that they can reassert their power and fight back to assume their equal place in society (Kristeva, 2015).

Summary of Portfolio

The following essays were successfully submitted as component parts of the doctoral degree:

Research methodologies for professional enquiry: In acknowledgement of my own interest and professional career as a classroom practitioner, this essay reviewed the philosophy and theory underpinning positivist and interpretative paradigms, and the tensions they produce in the deployment in educational research. I critically analysed the influence of both the positivist and interpretative paradigms on my future research and concluded by recommending the importance and value of using a mixed method approach in support of the Gorard's notion that it "creates researchers with an increased ability to make appropriate criticisms of all types of research. And is a key element in the improvement of ... educational research" (2004, pp.7).

Social theory and education: Comprising of two components, the first of which was a detailed description of ethnography. The ethical and analytical aspects of the research method were critically analysed and it concluded by recognising the suitability of ethnographic participant observation, as a research methodology for successful classroom research. The second component provided a brief historical review of the employment of research in standard ability classrooms and its application among children with special educational needs. A theoretical proposal, in support of participant observation was given and the essay concluded by acknowledging the need for sensitive inquiry in infant and primary classrooms, so that we may be rewarded with research evidence, which will benefit the future social, cultural and educational learning of our children.

Creativity in practice: This module consisted of two components. Component one was PowerPoint presentation using words, pictures and music used in the modelling and support of a creative art project with Year 5 and 6 children. This was followed with a second PowerPoint presentation accompanied by music which charted the children's creative progress in the development of their Merz collages, and interviews with the children and members of staff who comment on their Merz experience. The second component reflected upon the universal drive and desirability of incorporating creativity into educational policy and the theoretical frameworks of creative practice ascribed to Piaget, Vygotsky and Dewey, were acknowledged. My essay continued by offering a critical account of my own practice based research and demonstrated how an environment, conducive to creativity, was developed and a record of how and why the pupil participants responded.

Policy analysis for integrated services: This essay examined the implicit components of discourse and text and the concept of ideology which may influence and shape it. It offered a reflexive appraisal of the potency political/educational dialogue and continued by providing a brief overview of the history of educational policy making in which the influence of social and economic discourse was acknowledged with particular reference given to the history of Special Needs Education and the concept of inclusion. It continued along a natural trajectory by offering a critical evaluation on the policy document Removing Barriers to Achievement (2004a).

Institutions, discontinuities and systems of thought: This essay considered how contemporary media frequently portrays today's youth culture as being one which is steering society on a downward spiral towards a dystopian future. I examined the veracity of this impression by considering the descriptive accounts and representations from political and media driven sources written in light of the youth related actions of the 2011 UK riots. The patterns of discontinuity represented in these actions were critically examined and commented upon and the philosophical concepts of Hobbes and other salient philosophers. I followed this by employing a current literary phenomenon, The Hunger Games trilogy, a fictional interpretation of society and culture in a futuristic world to draw parallels between the institution, agency and discontinuity of Collins' trilogy and contemporary youth culture as it was portrayed in the media coverage of the 2011 UK riots. My essay concluded by examining whether this literary genre offers us, as educators, the opportunity for pedagogy and the potential to inform adolescent perceptions and assist in the nurturing of a moral and ethical code of philosophy which may help them to weather 'the storms and stresses' of their youthful existence (Hall, as cited by Arnett, 1999).

Introduction

To be a mother I must leave the telephone unanswered, work undone, arrangements unmet. To be myself I must let the baby cry, must forestall her hunger or leave her for evenings out, must forget her in order to think about other things. To succeed in being one means to fail at being the other (Cusk, 2008, p.57).

Cusk's appraisal of motherhood is one which describes the inner turmoil that I and many working mothers feel when they choose to leave their babies in order to pursue their career. During the latter years of the nineteen eighties and throughout the nineteen nineties I was a mother who, both through necessity and preference, chose to continue my career in teaching. I worked my way up the professional ladder in a concerted effort to gain status, job satisfaction and increased financial security for the benefit of my family. Twenty six years later, following the announcement of my daughter's first pregnancy I became a participant observer and researcher in her maternal transformation. However, although she was embarking on a similar journey to my own, in essence it was also very different. She has Relapsing and Remitting Multiple Sclerosis (MS) which manifests itself in periods of chronic fatigue and she therefore faced challenges I never had, which significantly, as the course of my study will reveal, impacted on the choices she made.

At the commencement of my study, my daughter anticipated that following the birth of her child she would return to her teaching post following a six month period of maternity leave. At this stage she was giddy with excitement and had not fully comprehended the challenges or changes that motherhood would bring. I was keen to discover how, so many years later, my daughter's experience would compare to my own. I wanted to find out how she coped; how the emotional challenges of leaving her child affected her; what changes being a mother

had on the equilibrium of her domestic situation; whether the change in her identity affected her professional status, and ultimately, understand her perception of what it now entailed to be a working mother.

Motherhood changes women (Sikes, 1997). It certainly changed me. It presented me with challenges I had never previously anticipated and opportunities which were positive in enhancing my professional capability. I was keen to learn whether it was going to be a similar scenario for my daughter. By constructing a holistic account of her 'journey', which encompassed both her pre-natal and post-partum experience, my study aimed to illuminate the physical and emotional changes she encountered and provide evidence of how she perceived the prevailing attitudes and circumstances within her professional and domestic environment which impacted on her life and decision making.

Because I am her mother and like her, a teacher, reflexivity formed a natural feature of my work. As Sikes (2010) acknowledges, "writing lives is always an auto/biographical process and acknowledging this is ... the first task that ethical researchers must address" (p.12). This I did. Part of the collected data, is data which was selected from my personal journal and field notes, and the reflexive appraisals, following each trimester, were analysed wearing both my maternal and professional hats. I would suggest, that rather than detract from the data, they add a richness and depth which perhaps may have been more difficult to access had my role been less involved. I acknowledge my relationship to the research not only because I support its innate value, but also because, as Sikes suggests, it is "part of [my] ethical responsibility to readers ... [so that] bias and partisanship [can] be taken into account" (p.19).

I have chosen methodologies and methods which not only provide a rich source of data but also add depth and insight, the honesty of which, again I believe, have been enhanced because of my role as Parent as Researcher (PAR). And because this study is essentially concerned

with the investigation of a uniquely female concept i.e. motherhood and what it means to be a working mother, I have chosen to use a feminist theoretical lens to analyse the data. The theorists and writers whom I call upon, are women whose past work has helped to change the lives of women today. They are mothers/researchers who have shed light on the difficulties faced by women when they become working mothers; social theorists who have documented the discrimination, pressure and emotional trauma which these women can fall victim to. Their accounts have helped to change many aspects of women's everyday lives, but as the recent Equality and Human Rights Commission (2015) findings confirm, there is still much more that needs to be done. I intend that my study will add to the work already undertaken by these women, and that careful analysis of the data will help "to make visible taken-for-granted practices, and structural and cultural features of [their] everyday social worlds" (Bathmaker 2010, p.4), so that changes can be introduced which may go some way to help ease the burden for working mothers of the future.

My research commences by focussing on my daughter's pre-natal experience; continues by offering a comprehensive account of her maternity leave; and concludes with an examination of her return to work as a full-time teaching professional. I believe it provides a reflexive, authentic understanding of her journey from being a full-time working teacher to being a full-time working mother and teacher.

The specific aims of this study are addressed in the following research questions:

- How does this teacher perceive her experience of maternity, motherhood and return to teaching?
- To what extent is this teacher's professional identity affected by her maternal role?
- What are her perceived effects of being a mother upon her life/work balance?

I have chosen to use the analogy of the three trimesters of pregnancy to examine the three stages of her participation. Although initially I had proposed that this study should be carried out over a period of twelve months, mid-way through the research, the timescale changed and therefore the duration of each stages varies in length. Although this change impacted on the completion date of my research it did provide robust data which supported the dilemma of her situation.

It is presented in the following way:-

Chapter one describes the main methodological constituents of my research approach and the ethical considerations required in its implementation. Essentially my research is an Ethnographic/Auto-ethnographic narrative which has employed a variety of qualitative research methods conducive to the natural engagement of our mother/daughter relationship (Aull Davies, 2008), perhaps the most significant of which, is the element of reflexivity. This approach has, I believe, helped to elicit an understanding of this young teacher's lived experience and her personal perceptions of it, and where appropriate, added balance, richness and historical social depth to the data. This chapter also considers the ethical justification for my study, my methodological approach and the methods used in the collection of the data. From the embryonic stage, I was aware that the ethical positioning of my work was "an integral component of [my] research (Sikes, 2010, p.11). The research participant is my daughter and this chapter explains how I sought to protect her integrity but also provide a study which gave an honest account of her lived experience which was uncompromised by our Parent as Researcher (PAR) relationship.

Chapter two provides an account of the theoretical positioning guiding my study. Through the employment of a feminist lens, I draw on the work of female philosophers, theorists and writers, each of whom have produced seminal works on the role of women in society and their

perceptions of the maternal and whose notions on power and identity resonate with the emergent themes of the data collected.

Chapters' three to five represent the three trimesters or phases of my research. They each contain four selected samples of the collected data which are examined, discussed and analysed using research literature pertinent to the topic under discussion.

- Chapter three offers data collected in the first trimester, when Lily was pregnant and still teaching.
- Chapter four, data collected during the second trimester, while she was on maternity leave, following the birth of her daughter.
- Chapter five, data selected from the third trimester, following her return to teaching, when her identity changed into that of a working mother.

Chapter Six draws together the findings which the analysis of my data have revealed.

My study concludes with a précis of my research and how it contributes to current theory.

Chapter One: Methodology

1.1 Outline of design methodology

The methodology of my study was a matter of considerable deliberation for me. After much research and internal debate I decided that a case study using a mixed methodological approach incorporating Ethnography, Autoethnography and a written Reflexive Narrative would allow me not only to “investigate and illuminate” the “social reality” of Lily’s lived experience (Esterberg, 2002, p.1), but also recognise and value my personal involvement and contribution to the study.

Case Study

My research is an individual case study of my daughter’s maternal journey and while I have not sought to represent all mothers, just provide a faithful account of her experience (Stake, 1994, p.235), the questions asked have the potential to resonate with many working mothers. Data was collected which reflected the physical, economic and political setting of her experience (Stake, 2000, p.438) and this was intensively analysed to understand how and why she interpreted her experience in the way that she did (Bryman, 2012). It delivered an intrinsic study which was an authentic and honest reflection of my daughter’s understanding of her social world during this phase of her life (Denzin and Lincoln 2000; Yin, 2014), a study which offers an insight into current maternal practices and the experiences of working mothers’ in Britain today (Stake, 2000).

Ethnography: The heart of the study

The duality of my role as researcher and mother is naturally aligned towards an ethnographic qualitative approach which requires the researcher to “engage rather than withdraw from the ‘real world’ messiness” of life (Crang and Cook, 2007, p.14). I was fortunate that given the

nature of my relationship with the participant [mother/daughter] my study did not require a synthetic immersion into an alien social world that many ethnographic researchers find necessary. I was already a significant agent in her social world (Emmerson, Fretz and Shaw, 2010, supported by Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007), only now my natural periods of observation and participation took on a new significance (Atkinson, Coffey, Delamont, Lofland and Lofland, 2010). Drawing on ethnographic research techniques of observation and participation, I studied the cultural features and settings of my daughter's environments, explored how she managed her situation and examined how her perceptions were influenced (Van Manen, 1990). I witnessed the physical, psychological and cultural changes she experienced and ultimately delivered the 'thick description' required of a study like mine (Geertz, 1973). In doing so I employed a "diverse repertoire of research techniques" (Atkinson et.al, 2010, p.4), including journals, field-notes and interviews. These field-notes were often written retrospectively, a practice which allowed me to collaborate naturally with my daughter (Van Maanan, 1988) and maintain the integrity of our relationship while also producing "written accounts and descriptions that brought versions of [her] world to others" (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, 2010)

Reflexivity –an essential part of my study

Underpinning this mixed methodological approach is my use of reflexivity. According to Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) supported by Etherington (2004), reflexivity has become a progressively important feature of contemporary social science research, in fact Aull Davies (2008) suggests that it is of "central importance to all social research"(p.3). It certainly formed an essential part of my study. It allowed me to use my 'closeness' to my daughter to "challenge and deepen my understanding of my own life, and my own experiences and to heighten my comprehension of hers" (Kiesinger, 1998, p.72). A feminist research method, it also it enabled

my daughter to have a voice, to be heard and listened to (Etherington, 2004), and allow her the opportunity to share her innermost thoughts (Pillow, 2003). Through reflexive analysis of her personal journal, the interactive way in which the interviews and periods of participant observation were undertaken, i.e. in an entirely natural manner, I was privy to data which may otherwise have been missed or not freely documented; likewise she was able to co-collaborate in the data collection process and was given agency – it was, as Etherington (2004) suggests, “a balance of both voices” (p.38). Reflexivity enabled “reciprocity” ... and allowed for an equalizing of “the research relationship”... so that together we were “doing research ‘with’ her instead of ‘on’ her (Pillow, 2003, p. 179).

It also allowed for the inclusion of my story. As previously acknowledged, mine was not a research project that demanded detachment and non-partisan objectivity. In many ways my history probably influenced my daughter’s thinking and decision making. By using reflexivity I was able to reveal aspects of my own life story, my social positioning and preconceptions (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007); it also afforded me the opportunity to be transparent about my unique position so that the reader could be fully cognisant in how my role might have impacted on both the collection and the interpretation of the data being analysed (Etherington, 2004, p.31). Ultimately, rather than trying to remain an impartial, detached observer, reflexivity allowed me to illustrate not only “what I know” but also “how I know it” (Hertz, 1997), essentially “to have an ongoing conversation about experience while simultaneously living in the moment” (ibid, p.viii).

Reflexivity is not however without its critics. As Pillow (2003) acknowledges, some academics consider it to be a “self-indulgent, narcissistic and tiresome” research method which undermines “the conditions for emancipatory research” (p.176). Patai (1994), is blunter, she describes it as an excuse to ‘navel gaze’. Even Pillow, (ibid) supported by Aull

Davies (2008) acknowledges that it is “not an easy or comfortable” research method (p.193), that the intimate nature of the researcher’s position, which I recognised as being an advantage, can also be a problem, because without sustained monitoring and self-evaluation the very “insider/outsider” position of the researcher has the potential to override the essence of the data being collected so that the study is a reflection of the researcher’s thoughts rather than the participants (p.186). I however, prefer to support Etherington’s (2004) view, that rigorous self-awareness can prevent such partiality, and I worked hard to counteract such a possibility by consciously employing a process of introspection throughout the collection and examination of my data. This, I believe, provided an accurate account and analysis of my daughter’s actions and thoughts, not merely a description of my personal perceptions (Pillow, 2003). Throughout the course of my study I have been inspired by the work of researchers like Ball, Clough, Etherington, Ellis, Richardson and Sikes. They, like me, undertook research which involved participants and subject matter which was pertinent to their own lives, research which resulted in the collection of rich data and significant outcomes, in which their personal and academic voices worked in conjunction with that of their participants (Kiesinger, 1998, p.38). I have done the same and rather than it being a confusing self-indulgent method it has been “a dynamic process of interaction within and between” myself and my daughter (ibid p.36).

Reflexivity also features in the examination and dissemination of my data which was undertaken in the discussion and analysis and reflexive sections of my study. Although I scrutinised and interpreted the possible meanings of the data to ensure “that the analysis [was] plausible” (Esterberg, 2002, p. 195), reflexivity helped me to be sensitive to the happenings and features of Lily’s life, so that I not only analysed “what actually happened” but also interpreted how she made “sense of what happened and to what effect” (Bryman, 2012, p.582). As previously stated, although the issue of subjectivity and bias might have been an

area for concern, for me it was not, because as Goodson and Sikes (2001, p.31) acknowledge, I was “unlikely to be seeking an objective account”. However, to counterbalance any possible criticism and provide “better, less distorted research” (ibid. p.178), where appropriate, I signposted the areas where my own subjectivity had arisen and identified and explained when I felt my daughter’s account displayed bias. Ultimately I would argue that reflexivity helped to deliver an honest account of my daughter’s lived experience and was an appropriate “basis for the overall authority of [my] findings” (Aull Davies, 2008, p.272).

Autoethnography – Beyond Reflexivity

As already acknowledged, reflexivity played a significant role in the way I conducted my research, but it is also clear that my study frequently transcended a reflexive ethnographical method and travelled beyond, into the realms of Autoethnography. On these occasions my “insider/outsider” persona (Pillow, 2003, supported by Reed-Danahay, 1997) was usurped by that of a “full insider” (White, 2003, p.26), and accounts of my life and experience became “intertwined” with those of my daughter and my study (Adams, Holman Jones and Ellis, 2015, p.9).

According to White (ibid), Autoethnography is thought to have first been used as a research method by David Hayano in 1979, and since its inception its popularity has increased so that today it is a recognised research method used by academics throughout the world. These social science practitioners consider it to be a “more flexible, open-ended and ethical qualitative research method” (Adams, Holman Jones and Ellis, 2015, p.15), far removed from the detached, objective methods associated with orthodox ethnography. Essentially it is a method which does not demand objective separation, but petitions inclusion, offering researchers like myself a means “for articulating their personal connections to – and their investment in – identities, experiences, relationships, and/or cultures” (ibid). Ellis (2009), one of the leading

proponents of autoethnographical research suggests that it is a way for sociologists to make their work relevant to ordinary people, to “humanize the academic project” by telling sociology in a “passionate way” (p.95), not devoid of emotions as had previously been the norm, but by capturing them and analysing them, because fundamentally “private and social experience are fused in felt emotions” (p.97). This assessment is also supported by Richardson (2001), another prominent Autoethnographer. She states that Autoethnography is an acknowledged and important method of social science research because “try as writers do to suppress their humanity, thankfully it keeps erupting in their choice of metaphors, topics and discourses” (p.34).

But not all social scientists agree. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) consider Autoethnography as being a “contentious approach to ethnographic research” (p.205). For them, it is akin to an unruly child, spawned of reflexive ethnography, which now flouts the conventions of recognised social science practices and “transforms the social into the personal”. It is, they suggest, “reflexivity taken to the extreme in which the voice of the author is the dominant one”, a method which transforms “the canons of rigour for ethnographic research into essentially aesthetic matters” (ibid). Richardson (2001) refutes this. She states that researchers should not be constrained to writing about the impersonal, rather, we should use our voices, our experience and our lives to inform our research because that is what “produces meaning [and] creates social reality” (p.35). This view is also shared by Ellis, Adams and Bochner, (2011). They suggest that historically and culturally, many qualitative researchers now realise the value of producing “meaningful, accessible and evocative research which is grounded in personal experience” (p.2), and that the systematic analysis of such research evidence yields an honest understanding of knowledge which is potentially more valuable because it is able to transcend the boundaries of academia and be read by a lay audience. Quintessentially I would suggest that it is social science which is written by ‘real’

people- for ‘real’ people’, and I am in no doubt, that for researchers like me, Bochner (2002); Ellis (2009; 2004; 1993); Etherington (2004); Kiesinger (1998) and Richardson, (2001); those of us who have used the events of our personal lives to inform the structure of our academic ones, Autoethnography is a valuable tool.

But it is not without its difficulties. Rambo’s 1992 study, which examined her life as an exotic dancer and researcher, is a case in point. In it she emotionally described the worries she faced in maintaining a ‘researcher self’ in the face of other role demands. Ellis (1993, 1995) also described the emotional vulnerability that she subjected herself to when her autoethnographical works, ‘There are survivors’ and ‘Final negotiations’ were written. During the compilation of both pieces she was forced to confront memories that she had deliberately suppressed, lay bare her vulnerability and relive highly emotional experiences. It is not an easy undertaking, but if one is to use it as a research method then it is a necessary one, for as Kiesinger (1998) suggests, Autoethnography demands that we must allow our own lives to be probed and challenged in the same way we expect our participants to, and while this may be uncomfortable at times, social science “that doesn’t break your heart just isn’t worth doing anymore” (Behar, 1996, p.177).

My work has travelled into the sphere of Autoethnography because like Ellis et al. I am a central character in the story which I have written about my daughter’s life. Although I had not anticipated being in such an overt position at the onset of my research, similar to White (2003), as I interacted with my daughter I found it became progressively more challenging to withdraw and adopt an impartial, reserved stance. Just as Kiesinger (1998) found with her bulimic research participant, in many ways my daughter’s experiences had once been mine and events or feelings recorded by my daughter triggered memories of my own. It became increasingly difficult not to voice my opinion or “refer to my own experiences for mutual

validation” (p.25). As a relatively novice researcher I was initially concerned that such explicit involvement and subjectivity would be problematical, however I was encouraged to discover, that similar to reflexivity, rather than condemn such personal investment Autoethnography is one of the methodological approaches that openly “acknowledges and accommodates subjectivity, emotionality and the researchers influence on research” and “rather than hiding from these matters or assuming they don’t exist” (Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2011,p.2) it allowed me to include them in my study as “aesthetic and evocative thick descriptions of personal and interpersonal experience” (ibid, p.5). Adams, Holman Jones and Ellis (2015) are also quick to suggest that thoughts of bias or partisanship should be quickly dispelled because Autoethnography is, they suggest, a method which demands personal investment, and rejects the need to “perpetuate the aura of objectivity” (p.16). Subsequently, Autoethnography has enabled me to produce a study which is an account of my daughter’s story, and to a lesser extent, mine, comprised of “rich, full accounts that include the messy stuff – the self-doubts, the mistakes, the embarrassments, the inconsistencies, the projections and that which may be distasteful” (Tenni, Smith and Bochner, 2003, p3), accounts which confronted “aspects of ourselves that were less than flattering (Ellis, 1999,p.672), but which were real, “analytical, accessible text” which may have the potential to help “change us and the world we live in for the better” (Holman Jones, 2005, p.764).

1.2 Ethics- A matter of considerable importance

The issue of ethics was a matter of considerable importance because as Sikes (2015) so wisely counsels, whatever the methodology used, writing about lives carries a “heavy ethical burden,” because ultimately we are writing and interpreting stories and accounts about people which may resonate in their lives long after our own studies has concluded (p.1). And these ethical considerations are not confined to just the main participants of the research, for

although my study is primarily concerned with my daughter's and my own experience it co-incidentally contains the stories of other people. Denzin (1989) states:

“Our primary obligation is always to the people we study, not to our project or to a larger discipline. The lives and stories that we hear and study are given to us under a promise, that promise being that we protect those who have shared them with us”
(p.83).

It is a consideration which infiltrated and influenced the whole of my study (Holman Jones, Adams and Ellis, 2016), because I realised that the way in which the participants were depicted and their actions interpreted had the potential to be both personally and socially damaging to them (Sikes, 2015 and 2010; Richardson, 2007). Although I worked hard to anticipate and cater for these ethical dilemmas it was a worry which continued to raise its head throughout the entire research process. Tolich (2016, 2010) supported by Sieber and Tolich (2013) acknowledge the challenges, he suggests that from the outset the researcher must try to anticipate and minimize any potential for harm. To assist in this he drew up a series of guidelines which, if implemented, helps to protect the vulnerability of both the researcher and participants. These are based on the foundations of consent, consultation and vulnerability, each of which he insists, must be at the forefront of the researcher's thinking during both the planning and operational points of his/her research. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) also recognise the need to maintain an ethical stance and similar to Tolich they also produced an ethical framework. This includes gaining informed consent; ensuring privacy for the participant is maintained; safeguarding the participant from harm or stress or exploitation and employing a process of continual assessment concerning the consequences of their work. I have used these guidelines and the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Framework for Research Ethics (2012), to explore the boundaries and complex ethical

judgements that my thesis required and have diligently striven to implement them throughout the period of my study.

From the outset, one of the primary ethical considerations I was faced with was the employment of my daughter as the research participant. We share a close relationship and I was eager that the aftermath of my study should in no way jeopardise this. I was also keen to ensure that she would be protected from any potential harm and that the “mutual respect, dignity and connectedness” we shared as mother and daughter would be maintained after our relationship as “researcher and researched” was over (Ellis, 2009, p. 308). It could be suggested that she may have felt an obligation to be part of my work. It was a consideration I addressed and which we discussed. I explained to her the ethical dilemma and although she admitted that she was obviously keen to support me, she also welcomed the opportunity of being the focus of a research study which may also provide an historical account of her pregnancy which could be shared in later years with her child. She also valued the prospect of contributing to the knowledge and history of this genre of social science. I was mindful however of the need that given my ‘Parent-as-Researcher’ (PAR) role “the emotional and familial primacy ...dictates that the issues of protection, safety and affection will take precedence” (Adler and Adler, 1997, p.38). We discussed how the study would be conducted; what her participation involved; why I was proposing to undertake the research and what my intended use of the research was. Although she was a little sceptical at first, suggesting that she was very boring, and that no one would be interested in the mundanity of her life, she was keen to participate. In compliance with the ethical code of conduct, I provided her with a copy of the ‘Participant Information Sheet’ supplied by The University of Chester and she signed the Informed Consent Form which was duly submitted at the approval stage of my research. I have never wittingly put my daughter at risk during this study. When issues have arisen which I felt were harmful, if exposed, or had no value to being included in my study I excluded

them. Although she had no objections to her name being used I gave her the pseudonym of Lily. Similarly other people who feature incidentally in the research were also given a pseudonym i.e. her husband is referred to as Richard, her Head teacher as X, my sister as Elizabeth. The names of the hospitals, university, school and play-centre which featured in her journals were omitted. I also protected my granddaughter's anonymity. She features significantly in the data and although her mother had no objection to me using her name, I was mindful to consider that in the future, she, my granddaughter, may feel differently so I gave her the pseudonym of Daisy. Where appropriate I also altered her name in Lily's journal writings. I have to accept however that this is not a completely failsafe way of protecting their identities (Bryman, 2012), because given that my name is openly acknowledged as being the researcher there is always the possibility that through secondary analysis a reader will be able to identify the participants of the study. Sikes (2012) states that the "complexities and contradictions" of these problems are apparent and although she does not wish to discourage the use of 'insider' research she warns against complacency (p.17). My acknowledgement should in no way be interpreted as complacency. I have been stringent in my attempt to protect the anonymity of my participants and I would suggest that as the content of my study contains no issues for risk and the probability of anyone outside of the academic environment reading it are limited, the precautions I have taken are appropriate.

A further ethical consideration in adopting a PAR study was the issue of power. As Adler and Adler (1997, p.22) acknowledge, issues of power and responsibility, influence and authority can emerge. Throughout the process of my study I have been conscious of the ethical responsibility I have to my daughter not to abuse our relationship. But, I am however also conscious of the need to provide a truthful account of her experience (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007), so one of the most challenging ethical concerns I faced was the selecting

and deselecting of the narrative data. As previously acknowledged, when considering the content of the data, not only did I have an ethical responsibility to my daughter, but also to the people and places that incidentally appeared in her data (Sikes, 2015; Clandinin and Connelly, 1994). I was keen to ensure that my interpretation did not inadvertently provide information which my daughter had not intended to reveal. Throughout I adhered to Ellis' (2009) recommendation to think carefully about "which questions to ask, which secrets to keep and which truths are worth telling" (p.317). While I acknowledge the value of this directive, according to Tolich (2010), it was not one which Ellis herself adhered to. He suggests that throughout her major works Ellis continually flouted the recognised ethical guidelines regarding the privacy and vulnerability of her mother and her dead partner. It was something I was anxious to avoid and to safeguard against such a possibility I implemented a strategy of 'process consent' as advocated by Tolich (2010) and Ellis (2009), which kept my daughter informed and allowed her the opportunity to withdraw her participation should she wish to. Only on one occasion did my daughter voice concern, when after reading my analysis of a text sent when her daughter was sick, she commented that it made her appear to be "a scheming bitch," however after I explained that it was written as an explanation and confirmation of the level of her concern for the well-being and welfare of her daughter, she accepted that it was an accurate description, and her respondent validation was agreed and the text remained (Sikes, 2010). If she had indicated otherwise, rather than editing my writing I would have removed the entire section from my study. At every step along the research process her autonomy was respected (Sikes, 2010). Ultimately however, as Tolich (2016) supported by Sieber and Tolich (2013) suggest, "no one can predict the types of ethical dilemmas that will emerge in the field. Any assessment ...is at best partial" (p.14), all we can do is act as responsibly and try and protect our participants as much as possible from any harm. It was a challenging task, and like Ellis, I was constantly aware of "the ethical questions

swirl[ing] around me like a sandstorm” (ibid, p.309). But as these questions arose I addressed them, always mindful of my need to be “faithful to what [I] perceive to be the truth of [her] story” (p.307), because as Holman Jones, Adams and Ellis (2016) suggest ethically well researched studies like mine are important because they help to “humanize research and make research more relevant, more accessible and more meaningful to others” (p.672).

1.3 Collecting data in the study.

The data collection tools I employed were selected because of their suitability to the chosen methodologies and employed using the ethical guidelines previously discussed.

Written sources: Journals, letters and texts.

One of primary sources of my data was the journal kept by my daughter. Following a meeting during which we discussed the nature of what was required i.e. a personal account of her experience which should describe the practical and emotional aspects of her lived situation as she interpreted them, she immediately began making a record. This began during the early months of her pregnancy, continued during the course of her maternity leave and was sustained for the duration of the autumn term following her subsequent return to work. Her journal entries were written and provided in the full knowledge that they may be used, unedited. While Clandinin and Connelly (1994) argue that journals are a potent source for gaining knowledge of an individual’s experience, Flick (2014) cautions that they can also give an unbalanced account. He states that because the participant is keeping a journal for the purposes of the research, the data which is recorded is written specifically with this in mind and therefore is only included because it fulfils the research criteria. Although I acknowledge the dilemma, I feel justified in its employment, both ethically and methodologically, for while my daughter may have been aware of the nature of the research and this may have influenced

the nature of what she recorded, fundamentally it is her interpretation, her perception of her lived experience which is valuable. Her journal has been instrumental in providing what Goodson and Sikes (2001) consider to be a rich source of data, in providing evidence of her interpretation of the phenomena of her experience and answering the questions posed by my study. In a similar vein, a journal was also kept by myself. I used it for the keeping of field notes and also for recording accounts of conversations (both face to face and telephone) and texts, and also as an aide-memoire for my thoughts on naturally occurring events. Watt (2007) suggests that for the researcher a journal is a valuable tool to employ, “if I was not writing down ideas and thoughts as they came to me I’d be missing a lot”(p.84). The text messages were sent by Lily and provided a spontaneous description of her feelings at that particular moment in time. She is part of a generation who have grown up using computer and mobile phone technology and it is second nature for her to communicate via the medium of text messaging. During the course of the study I regularly received texts from her which provided valuable data, personal accounts and perceptions which I would suggest were probably less contrived than her journal entry excerpts. Often sent in moments of frustration, tension and anxiety, they were clear indications of the emotional, physical and often professional strain she was encountering during that particular period of her life. Aspects of the data were often referred to again in her journal entries, an indication of the significance of their content and their relevance to my study. Although there was in fact only one letter, written by my daughter on the morning of her hospital confinement, it was included as a data source because of its significance. It provided a very personal account of the impact that the transitional maternal experience was already making to her life. Its raw honesty provided a rich and thoughtful description, both of her history and of the importance that she placed on her impending maternal identity. Further documents used in the data collection process included her maternity record and pregnancy scans, each of which were referenced and contributed to the

discussion and analysis of the first phase of my research. Each piece of data was collected with my daughter's permission in the full knowledge that it would form part of my study.

Semi-structured interview (taped).

According to Etherington (2002) and Goodson and Sikes (2001) the interview is an approach which is at the core of most social research. I chose to use semi-structured interviews at two points of my investigation – at the end of the second phase (the end of my daughter's maternity leave) and at the end of the third phase (following her return to work and as a finale to the collection of the data). Each of these interviews was tape recorded and transcribed verbatim at a later date. The interviews took place at an allotted time in my home. This was a familiar, non-threatening environment where my granddaughter could play safely throughout the interview process. I chose not to set a fixed timeframe, but to let each interview reach its natural conclusion. By using a semi-structured approach I was able to ask the questions which I believed were pertinent to my research, and also allow my daughter the opportunity of, what Esterberg (*ibid.* p.85) considers, a “freer exchange” i.e. to express her opinions more widely and go off along a different trajectory if necessary. Although I hoped to keep it in a conversational mode, it was, by the mere fact that I had a list of questions, more formal. The questions were not, however, rigidly adhered to and if I felt she had already answered a forthcoming question I set it aside. Similarly, if I thought her conversation was leading towards an area which I had not considered, I allowed her to continue. Each of the interviews were long and sometimes rambling in places but they were rich in data, not only from the verbal utterances but also the gesticulations, the pauses and the use of language. Where I believed these signs influenced the conception of the data, I annotated with a descriptive interpretation i.e. in the interview which took place at the end of the second trimester there are moments in the interview where I describe how her eyes lit up at the mention of Daisy, or how she wrapped her arms around herself to illustrate how she longed to keep hold of Daisy.

Similarly, in her final interview I annotated how she attempted to capture and illustrate her annoyance and passion with hand gestures i.e. the placing of both of her hands on her heart to show the depth of her empathy and passion towards the young child in the dinner queue. These interviews produced a copious amount of valuable data and were a true reflection of the participant's mind frame at various points of the research. However as revealed during the analysis and discussion sections, I did edit these quite heavily, not only because of the pressure of restricted word count but also to protect the participant's perceived character, i.e. on certain occasions her choice of language was colourful. Ethically I was mindful of Flick's (2014) suggestion that as a researcher I had to question whether certain aspects of the data were relevant to my research and if incorporating them into my study would cause unnecessary harm to the participant, when I felt that this was the case I chose to omit them. I kept the tapes, scan and letters in a locked cupboard, together with my own journal entries which were hand written in a daily diary. The journal entries, which she wrote using a computer program, were emailed to me electronically and stored by me in a designated file which was locked with the security of a pass word. I have, at all times, collected and stored the data in an appropriate and ethical manner

Participant observation and discussion.

Atkinson and Hammersley (1994) argue that "all social research is a form of participant observation, because we cannot study the social world without being part of it" (p.249) and certainly a large measure of my data was collected during naturally occurring periods of time when unpremeditated opportunities for participant observation arose. Esterberg (2002) suggests that one of the main challenges facing researchers is the gaining of trust and simultaneously adopting an almost invisible research persona. Fundamentally, I was striving to achieve authentic data, not data which has been manufactured or manipulated to meet the research criteria. Esterberg (ibid.) suggests that this can often be a protracted exercise, but for

me the establishment of a trusting relationship was already a given, only now, I was often viewing our interactions through a researcher's lens. Although I didn't carry my note book around with me, I would subsequently make field notes of incidences or discussions I had shared with the participant in naturally occurring situations i.e. during a visit to the play centre or a discussion we had while travelling to collect a 'take-away'. As revealed in one of my analyses, on occasion I sometimes felt like I was 'a spy in the camp' and although mindful and always vigilant to the possible ethical dilemmas, it was not always a comfortable position to adopt. The second phase of data collection was especially fertile, as Lily, free from the constraint of work, would often spend a large part of her day in my company. Ethically I was transparent. From the outset I explained to Lily how these naturally occurring moments may figure into the data collection, and throughout the period of the study I reiterated how certain incidents would be utilised. Because of the content and nature of my research I was keen to adopt a 'non-hierarchical' (if a mother/daughter relationship can ever be truly non-hierarchical) research approach, as advocated by Goodson and Sikes (2001), as I felt in doing so, it allowed my daughter to be empowered and take on the mantle of 'co-researcher' (p.102) which, in turn, would facilitate rich data which would inform the findings of my study.

I have used this mixture of methodologies and data collection tools in order that my study reflects, what Flick (2014) suggests, is the qualitative, open and adaptable nature of what has occurred and always mindful that "the prime ethical responsibility of the researcher is to pursue knowledge" (Hammersley and Traianou, 2012, p.6).

Chapter Two: Theoretical Landscape

Framework structure

The data collected for this thesis has been discussed and scrutinised over three chapters and has drawn upon a myriad of research evidence which was used to support each specific piece of data being discussed and analysed. However, from these discussion and analysis sections, explicit concepts have emerged and these I have selected for deeper theoretical consideration. In doing so I draw on the work of the philosophers de Beauvoir (1946) and Kristeva (1986, 2015), the theorists Friedan (1963, 1998); Oakley (1979, 2005), Rich (1986) and Sikes (1997), and current feminist writers like Asher (2011); Badinter (2011), Cusk (2008) and Wolf (2003), because their works, like mine, are essentially Ethnographic/Autoethnographic studies, informed by personal experience and observation of women in their own cultural society. While I recognise that much of their work is based on the historical positioning of their own social context, I acknowledge its enduring value, as my research findings suggest that the concerns and attitudes which these women have previously raised, in many respects, continue to resonate with the current generation of women.

An example of this is de Beauvoir's theory regarding the subordination of women, who by their very nature are regarded as the 'Other', and which was a subliminal feature emanating in several sections of my data. Others like Friedan, Oakley, Rich and Sikes, I draw upon heavily, because, like me, they are researchers and mothers who have used their personal experience to think about the maternal identity of women in society. Their work has helped to expose the continued exploitation of women whose lives have been influenced and prejudiced by the patriarchal dominance of their cultural environments. Writers like Asher, Cusk and Wolf, I have employed to help provide a current theoretical perspective on the issues which have emerged from my data. Together, each of these feminist writers, have contributed

to the theoretical framework used to support and examine my record of a young woman's journey into first-time motherhood and her subsequent experience as a working mother.

The themes which emerged from my data are: Motherhood, Identity and Power. These are interlinked but first I critically examine them separately.

2.1 Motherhood

The concept(ion) of motherhood.

Rich (1986) states that,

All human life on the planet is born of woman. The one unifying, incontrovertible experience shared by all women and men is that months-long period we spent unfolding inside a woman's body ... most of us first know both love and disappointment, power and tenderness, in the person of a woman. We carry the imprint of this experience for life, even into our dying (p.11).

"The concept of motherhood plays its part in every woman's life simply because she is a woman, and because motherhood is the expected norm for all women; such that even its absence has to be explained" (Sikes, 1997, p.40). For Rich (1986) bringing a child into the world, it is a life transforming experience. She states that

Motherhood is earned, first through an intense physical rite of passage – pregnancy and childbirth – then through learning to nurture ... her body has undergone irreversible changes, her mind will never be the same, her future as a woman has been shaped by the event (p.12).

It is however, only during the past fifty years that the concept of motherhood and what the reality of it entails has become a topic for research (Rich, 1986, supported by Sikes, 1997).

Granted, images of motherhood have been part of society since biblical times, as Bellini's 15th Century depiction of the Madonna and Child are evidence of, but one has to question how real these images are, or were ever meant to be. Sorabella (2013), perhaps endorsing the view of the patriarchal culture for which it was painted, describes it as being a portrayal of maternal serenity, of a woman who has achieved supreme fulfilment, while Kristeva (1985) offers a different view, suggesting that it is more redolent of an ambivalent, cold relationship. She complains that images such as these only demonstrate a misguided view of women and motherhood:-

This maternity turns out to be an adult (male and female) fantasy of a lost continent: what is involved, moreover, is not so much an idealized primitive mother as an idealization of the – localizable – *relationship* between her and us, an idealization of primary narcissism. (p.99)



Fig.17. "Giovanni Bellini: Madonna and Child (08.183.1)"(Sorabella, 2013).

One of the early feminist writers, Simone de Beauvoir (1949), never a mother herself, on the surface appears to have a contempt of the maternal, however I would suggest that she was concerned predominantly with the disadvantages that motherhood bestowed on women of her generation. Influenced by the prevailing economic and social structures in France at the time of writing, she argued that from birth, girls were persuaded into believing that they were made

for childbearing, that society perpetuated this myth and that women were cajoled into thinking that motherhood was the expected norm, that there was no alternative. Her frustration, charged by the inequality of living in a patriarchal society, was vocal. In her book, *The Second Sex*, she suggested that the very fact that women menstruate and have the capacity to bear children subjugates them into being, in the eyes of the world, the 'Other', a lower species than their male counterparts. For her, motherhood was a repressive and retrograde step for a woman to take, and one, which for many, was a consequence and not a choice. Firestone (1970) writing some twenty five years later and influenced by de Beauvoir stated:

Women throughout history before the advent of birth control were at the continual mercy of their biology – menstruation, menopause, and 'female ills', constant painful childbirth, wet-nursing and care of infants, all of which made them dependent on males (whether brother, father, husband, lover, or clan, government, community –at-large) for physical survival (p.9)

Kristeva (1980) however, while not fully sharing in Sorabella's idealised vision of motherhood, also distances herself from this view and suggests that women, rather than feeling condemned by their nature, should embrace their difference and remove themselves from "the straightjacket of old, sexist thinking which marginalizes women from the currents of social, symbolic thought" (as cited by McAfee, 2004 p.76). Rather than being damned for taking on the role of the maternal, she suggests that women should be free to have children and still be a part of a culturally creative society. According to Kristeva there is no reason why the two should not be mutually inclusive. Whether this juxtaposition to de Beauvoir's reasoning is driven by historical social change or Kristeva's personal experience is debateable, but rather than condemning motherhood for the adverse effect it may have on a woman's life and career, Kristeva offers a description of pregnancy which is almost reverential:

Cells fuse, split and proliferate; volumes grow, tissues stretch, and body fluids change rhythm, speeding up or slowing down. Within the body, growing as a graft, indomitable, there is another. And no one is present, within that simultaneously dual and alien space, to signify what's going on. "It happens, but I am not there." "I cannot realize it, but it goes on." Motherhood's impossible syllogism. (1980, p.237)

Kristeva (1980) paints a metaphorical description of pregnancy and motherhood, which, rather than being a basic, animalistic, biological act, a by-product of a woman's physiological make up, is in fact the essence of the ultimate human activity, marking a new beginning, not only of the infant within her womb, but also of the woman herself. Kristeva (1980) states that when she becomes a mother, a woman becomes totally invested in the child within her womb to the point of self-absorption; her emotions and body assume a 'oneness' with her child. The child is, "growing as a graft, indomitable", it changes her and she must learn to embrace these changes (p. 237). While I recognise the truth behind this statement I would also tentatively suggest that a graft only 'takes' successfully if the conditions for the host are tended to and supported.

And perhaps Kristeva (1986) acknowledges this too, because alongside the maternal eulogising, she also cautions a more theoretical note of cynicism. Recognising that the physical unity which exists between the foetus and the mother is only transitory, she counsels that the mother must also invest in her own identity, because in a relatively short space of time she will be forced to take a step back, to display a dispassion which would appear to be at total odds with her love for her child. For the child which has depended on her for its life and nurturing will soon abject her in its eagerness to assume his own identity. During a period which will bring great anxiety, the mother must distance herself, wean her child so that he/she

is no longer dependent solely on her. It is a difficult and testing achievement, but according to Kristeva (2015) it is a prime example of true maternal passion, and one which is as essential for the mother as it is the child, because it embodies freedom and according to Kristeva (ibid.) “being free means having the courage to begin anew: such is the philosophy of motherhood” (p. 4).

Irrespective of theoretical positioning on the advantages or disadvantages of becoming a mother, it is an irrefutable fact that in order for the human race to continue, pregnancy and motherhood remain an essential requirement. Even de Beauvoir (1949) recognised that despite the disadvantages it may bring, motherhood is a woman’s “natural calling, since her whole organic structure is adapted for the perpetuation of the species” (p.501). What is different today is the issue of choice. Unlike the mandatory portrait of childbearing depicted by de Beauvoir (1949), the majority of European women now have far more choice and autonomy in their decision to embrace the maternal (Badinter, 2011). It no longer has to be a consequence of their nature or an expected outcome of their marital commitment. Badinter (ibid.) supported by Rich (1986) acknowledges how the fight for modern methods of contraception and the legal right for abortion, fought for by pioneers of the feminist movement like de Beauvoir (1949) and Firestone (1970) have helped to make pregnancy a matter of choice and not an irrevocable error. And in those given circumstances even de Beauvoir (ibid.) concedes that “the mother will ultimately find her life enriched by the birth of her child” (p.526).

The reality of motherhood.

In her essay, *Stabat Mater*, Kristeva (1986), provides us with a portrayal of maternity from her own experience. It is a poetic description of the child growing within her and her profound love for this ‘other’ who is not really ‘other’ but part of her. It is written alongside a description

of the Virgin Mary, which she suggests patriarchal figures of the Early Church manipulated to subsume her femininity into one of biological essentialism. Kristeva (ibid.) purports that rather than accept Mary as being a normal woman, these patriarchal figures of history eradicated every essence of her humanity so that eventually she is portrayed as being an eternal virgin, whose pregnancy was an immaculate conception, and whose whole life is given over to her Son. Such is Mary's devotion, she was eventually elevated by the men of the church to the position of Queen of Heaven and ignoring the reality of her feminine existence, was permitted to escape the final blow of a humanity – death, and was assumed into a heavenly repatriation with her Son. Mary's maternal experience, is Kristeva (ibid) suggests, a portrayal of motherhood crafted by men whose written and artistic depictions were acclaimed during a period when women's voices went unheard or were ignorantly discounted. It was a patriarchal society, which was probably entirely natural to this young woman (Rich, 1986), but which only served to provide a description of the maternal which only Form Critics [the stories about Jesus which have been passed down through oral transmission] might trust. Even women of faith, myself included, who venerate the figure of Our Mother Mary and revere her blessed status, acknowledge that this depiction of motherhood bears little resemblance to our own, because although Mary may have been the totally accepting mother of Christ, whose maternal anguish has been either disregarded or unaccounted for, for the majority of women, each day is a battle against the suffering, pain, anguish and guilt that motherhood bestows. This, states Kristeva (1986), is the reality of motherhood and representations of women being passive receptacles with no desires of their own only helps to perpetuate the myth of the maternal and are essentially flawed.

The challenges of motherhood

Even if one disregards the image of maternity created by the Church, for those who walk the path of motherhood, the reality of the role may be quite different to the imagined. According to Oakley (1979, 2005) even though women may be genetically prepositioned towards the maternal they do not necessarily have an innate maternal instinct and therefore childbirth can be a source of shock and disillusionment. She [Oakley] suggests that the reality of “pregnancy, childbirth and motherhood conflicts with over-romanticised expectations” (p120), and she describes it as being a moment of crisis, a point of no return; and possibly the first time that a woman “confronts the full reality of what it means to be a woman in our society” (p.1). This crisis point is also acknowledged by Rich (1986) who commenting on her own experience suggests that:

No one mentions the psychic crisis of bearing a first child ... the sense of confused power and powerlessness, of being taken over on one hand and of touching new physical and psychic potentialities on the other, a heightened sensibility which can be exhilarating, bewildering and exhausting (p.36).

Oakley (1979) supported by Wolf (2003) would appear to agree. She argues that the sleek magazine depictions of childbirth being “a piece of cake and motherhood a bed of roses” are totally misleading (p.6). For ordinary women the very real feelings of exhaustion and anxiety are sometimes overwhelming. Wolf (2003) described how, although delighted in the birth of her daughter, her life had become the epitome of what she had feared. She stated, “I experienced a tightening of the world’s circumference; I *was* chained to the couch, nursing, I *was* stunned with fatigue ... I had become all the things I was most afraid I would be” (p.208). Sikes (1997), however considers this a natural consequence of motherhood (p.51), and Asher (2011) agrees. She suggests that having grown and given birth to her child, a mother cannot

sit back and passively watch its development from afar, as men quite often do, because mothers become immersed in their children's lives. The child is dependent upon its mother and the lion's share of responsibility for their physical and emotional well-being is placed firmly on her shoulders (p.11). Motherhood changes a woman, because the responsibility and accountability for another's well-being is a responsibility which mothers seldom shirk (Oakley, 1979). It creates a level of anxiety that is beyond comprehension and can be something of an ordeal. And accompanying the anxiety, is the exhaustion of motherhood. Asher (2011), paints a vivid, but realistic picture of the fatigue which engulfs the average mother:

I appear to be in the grip of a life-sapping disease. My skin is sallow and drawn, the grey offset only by the aubergine accents below the eyes. My cheeks are hollow. My shoulders are hunched ... my dressing gown is covered in an applique of baby snot and nappy cream. My T-shirt, an old Fawcett Society number, is stiff with stale breast milk. I look down. Among the stains it is possible to pick out a slogan. It reads: *This is What a Feminist Looks Like*.
(p. 1).

Asher's experience is not unusual. Fulfilling the demands of a new baby can be all consuming. As she and Cusk (2008) both testify, the woman may have neither the time nor the energy to clean the home, or prepare the meals, or even wash her hair, and as Lily reveals, this only serves to exacerbate her feelings of anxiety and guilt. But why are these emotions so prevalent? Rich (1986), supported by Sikes (1997) argues that regrettably the yardstick which is used to assess a mother's competence is based upon knowledge which is assumed rather than examined, and is very often written by men. Friedan (1963) would appear to agree, she suggests, that in attempting to live up to the unrealistic, unnatural image of the perfect wife

and mother portrayed within the annals of these publications, most women fail and are overcome by feelings of inadequacy and guilt. Rich (1986) described the complexity of a mother's position when she wrote, "the shock of motherhood had left me reeling" (p.194). Not only is she faced with the exhaustion of her increased role but also with the psychological impact of caring for another who is totally dependent on her for their very life and well-being. Sikes (1997) suggests that "childbirth and rearing are the two most crucial social tasks there are" (p.42), and that together with the joy they bring, they also bring pain, both physical and emotional, and according to Kristeva (1986) it is a pain which is everlasting:

One does not bear children in pain, its pain that one bears: the child is pain's representative and once delivered moves in for good. Obviously you can close your eyes, teach courses, run errands, clean house, think about things, about ideas. But a mother is also marked by pain, she succumbs to it. (p.104)

These accounts are the interpretations of what motherhood is like for 'real' women. It is my intention that my study will help expose the authenticity of my daughter's lived reality and not help perpetuate the myth.

2.2 Identity

Historical accounts would suggest that a woman's identity has been a casualty of her very existence since records began. According to Davis (2012), historically being born into a male-controlled environment meant that women lived as an adjunct to one man or another – always someone's daughter; someone's wife, her autonomy submerged beneath a patriarchal society which was reluctant to succumb to its feminine counterpart; and although tremendous advancements were made by the pioneers of early feminism e.g. Pankhurst; Stanton and Wollstonecraft, to name but a few, the fight for an identity of one's own was and still remains an ongoing feature of the women's movement. As a young girl, I recall my confusion when

my maternal grandmother referred to herself as being Mrs Billy Davies. How could my grandmother be called Billy? I didn't understand it. Although she appeared quite proud of her status, in truth it was merely confirming that through marriage she was, in the eyes of society, my grandfather's chattel. Many years have passed and many advancements have been made, but it would appear even today, the fight for equality goes on, especially when a woman becomes a mother (Friedan, 1963).

Impact of motherhood on a woman's identity.

Badinter (2011) and Friedan (1963), suggest that it is when a woman becomes a mother and she relinquishes her autonomy that a woman's crisis of identity may develop. Friedan (1963) recalled how women of her generation had been persuaded into thinking that motherhood was the panacea for all of their ambitions, that they should not hanker after a career, an education or political rights - "the independence and the opportunities that the 'old-fashioned' feminists fought for ... all they had to do was devote their lives from earliest childhood to finding a husband and bearing children" (p.6). But this way of thinking was, according to Friedan (ibid.), a catalyst for disaster. It resulted in the woman's crisis of identity and created "the problem that has no name", the "Feminine Mystique", which even she (Friedan) would succumb to (p.52). This crisis of identity, is captured by Friedan (1963) in an interview given by one of the young female participants of her research, whose fear of motherhood had been influenced by the example set by her own mother. She suggested that she would never succumb to the maternal, because in her view the effect it would have was all pervading and left the woman a shell of her former self.

It's as if I wouldn't have any personality myself. My mother's like a rock that's been smoothed by the waves, like a void. She's put so much into her family that there's nothing left, and she resents us because she doesn't get

enough in return. But sometimes it seems like there's nothing there. (Friedan, 1963, p.55)

While it is realistic to accept that motherhood does bring irreversible changes, it should not mean that we should lose sight of who we are. Oakley (1979) describes it as being “an extraordinary event. It breaks all the rules of ordinary existence” (p.210) and women need to respond accordingly. Sikes (1997) recognises that this change is not only internal but also external, for as soon as a pregnancy is made known or becomes visible the entire concept of a woman's being is transformed in the eyes of society. She states, “Women become mothers in the eyes of others and a different sort of person in and to the world” (p.40).

For many women, this transition is difficult. It can involve the restructuring of one's entire personality (Oakley 1979, p.12). Asher (2011) would appear to agree, overwhelmed by the enormity of her new situation and the change of her status in the eyes of those around her, she uttered the plaintive cry, “all I did was have a baby” (p.35). Wolf (2003) described motherhood as a period of mourning, a “a point of departure in the road that [she] could never retrace” and even though she took great joy from becoming a mother she also realised that it was the end of the “I” she had been and the start of a new “I” which needed to be reconfigured. At the point of conception the woman has morphed into two and soon she will no longer be the star attraction. Until this moment she has been the ‘leading lady’ in her own life-drama, but now, at this point in her performance, her baby takes centre stage and she is relegated to the role of supporting player. It is almost as though a cloak of invisibility is wrapped around her, but instead of cocooning and reassuring her, it has the potential to shroud her in a mood of despair and lack of self-worth. In Sikes' study, ‘Parents Who Teach’ (1997), one of her participants, Helen, described it as “being defined in terms of someone else” (p.37). The woman becomes someone's ‘mummy’, and although she may take pride in that title, it is a denial of her

individuality and it has the potential to impact on her ability to cope successfully with the demands of her maternal role. As Oakley (1979) stated, “the social attitude to women as mothers negates a woman’s identity: she is no one, her life is finished” (p.251). What I believe Oakley is suggesting, is that the woman’s former existence is finished, now she faces the reality of life as a mother and has to cope with the demands and restrictions which that role carries. Friedan (1963) witnessed over fifty years ago how motherhood impacted detrimentally on a woman’s identity, and even today, in an age of relative independence for women, it would still appear to be a concern. Echoing Friedan’s theory of loss, Oakley (2005) stated that a common theme amongst new mothers is that they feel that they have “lost something, rather than simply gaining a child – one’s job; life style; sense of self” (p.180) and that these feelings are not entirely compensated by the rewards of motherhood. Together with the more tangible elements of their previous existence, what they have lost I would suggest, is their own understanding of who they are. As de Beauvoir (1949) states: “There is one feminine function that it is actually almost impossible to perform in complete liberty. It is maternity ... having a child is enough to paralyse a woman’s activity entirely” (p.705). As my study reveals, the responsibility and accountability which go hand in hand with motherhood has the ability to submerge a woman’s identity beneath a tidal wave of exhaustion and emotion and leave her gasping for breath both physically and metaphorically. However, as Rich (1986) concludes, while we may “carry the imprint of this experience for life” (p.11) we must not allow it to consume us entirely, because we “could love so much better ... after even a quarter-hour of selfishness, of peace, of detachment from [our] children” (p.23). What I believe Rich is suggesting is, that no matter the love one has for one’s child, a mother should also love herself and cling on to her identity – her identity as strong, independent woman, both within the confines of the marital home and the borders beyond, because motherhood is life changing and the repercussions can be far reaching.

Economic changes which impact on a woman's identity.

It is not only the emotional and physical changes which impact on a woman's identity but also the economic changes which influence both the institutional conception of who a woman is and the practical reality of how she is able to pursue her life. Until this moment the majority of women have enjoyed a certain independence which has been facilitated by financial freedom, but as Oakley (2005) declares, now their "life is changed because motherhood is a new job ... economically a woman with a baby is dependent in a way that a woman without a baby is not" (p.142), and this is especially true if the mother chooses to remain at home while her child is young and she becomes entirely financially dependent on her partner. It may also be true of the later stages of maternity leave, because when the woman is no longer able to contribute equally to the financial burden of day to day living with her partner, the equilibrium of the relationship can become unbalanced and the woman quickly loses her equal status within the household (Friedan, 1963).

For many women today, the effect of economic deprivation is temporary and the balance is reinstated when they return to work, but this is not the case for all women, so it is important that every attempt is made to resist the potential pitfalls of such a situation. In France, Badinter (2011) states that women enjoy "the benefit of historic recognition of their identities beyond motherhood" (p. 166). She suggests that throughout history French women have been encouraged to share the care of their children with wet nurses and other care practitioners, so that they could pursue her own interests and that it is a supportive attitude which continues to be upheld today, by a French society which continues to encourage and facilitate the mother's early resumption of her career and fiscal independence. According to Badinter (2011):

Tolerant and blame-free, this collective attitude plays a positive role in women's decision to have children. The lighter the burden, [*both fiscal and emotional,*] on the mother and the greater the respect given to her choices as a woman, the more likely she is to want the whole experience of child raising, and even to repeat it (p.167). [*The italics are mine*].

It is an approach which Friedan (1963) believes would help all mothers, not only because of the benefits it bestows on them as individuals, but also because it allows them to provide their children with a female role model who has self-respect, dignity and a strong sense of self, so that their daughters can emulate them and their son's admire and respect women like them. The decision on how this might be achieved is personal. For some women this may be full-time motherhood, but for a large number of women, women like Lily, it is through the resumption of their career. Friedan (1963) argues in support of the working mother and she cautions those women who avow themselves to the complete capitulation of the maternal role so that it becomes their total way of life, questioning the wisdom of their decision to relinquish their identity and deny themselves the possibility of the emancipated future that is open to them. Rich (1986) would appear to agree. She argues that while women should not be ashamed to embrace and enjoy the role of motherhood, they should also remember that it is only "one part of the female process; it is not an identity for all time", that when our children leave, "we need selves of our own to return to" (p.37).

2.3 Power

In her essay, *The Second Sex*, de Beauvoir's (1949) principal concern is the freedom of woman. She associated freedom with power and considered it to be the right of everyone and not distinguishable by genre. According to Moi (2008), de Beauvoir was outraged that historically, women, who were free subjects, "had been pressured into defining themselves as

objects, as *other* in relation to another group of free subjects” (p.203). de Beauvoir argued that the power to control another’s freedom is inexcusable and must never be tolerated. For her, lack of freedom leads to oppression and her fight for feminine equality in all walks of life was driven by the notion that if their rights remained unrecognised, women would be exploited and dominated by their male counterparts. Power, either the lack of it, or the gradual recovery of it, is a recurring theme throughout my study. At the commencement of my research Lily appears to be empowered by the achievement of her pregnancy, towards the middle, her anxiety threatens to suppress her feelings of control and power and towards the end, as she becomes increasingly secure in her maternal identity and buoyed by the reclamation of her professional identity, she once again begins to display aspects of the empowered woman of her pre-natal self.

Writing nearly forty years later, Rich (1986) would also appear to support de Beauvoir’s theory. She states that “power is both a primal word and a primal relationship under patriarchy” (p.64). History, she suggests, provides us with a clear account of the power relationship which man has had with the world around him and especially in and over the lives of women. Throughout history, and in all aspects of life, men would appear to have had the controlling power – physical; economic or institutional, and similar to de Beauvoir, Rich (1986) cautions that “for one person to have power, others – or another- must be powerless” (p.67). Fortunately as the years have passed women have increasingly stood up to fight for liberation and equality and slowly the balance of power has begun to shift, however it would appear despite the progress that has been made, the struggle for absolute equality remains an ongoing battle (Rodham Clinton, 2014).

Medical power.

One of the areas where women would appear to have become increasingly disempowered in the past fifty years, is during pregnancy, when it could be suggested that they are at their most vulnerable. Cusk's (2008) personal account of her delivery is a good example of how pregnancy is becoming a progressively more institutionalised procedure. Reminiscent of the experience of many women today, she described how the medical fraternity sprang into action and decided, how, when and where her baby would be delivered, ignoring her protestations, until she grew "mute and limp with acceptance" (p.46). She complained that when the day of her baby's delivery arrived there was no spontaneity and naturalness, no movement within her womb to herald her baby's impending arrival; instead she became part of a 'conveyer belt' of women wheeled out of the ward one by one into the cold, unemotional reality of a medicalised caesarean delivery. Her bleak description of her daughter's birth provided stark evidence of the trauma it caused her:

There is some tugging and pushing and wriggling, which I feel through a thick blanket of anaesthetic. Everyone is talking ... What's happening? I say. My voice seems preternatural coming out of my dead body. I fear suddenly that I have been forgotten, that I am going to be left dismantled, a talking head on a table. (Cusk, 2008, p.48).

Oakley's (2005) research would appear to uphold the authenticity of Cusk's experience. Commenting on the increasing medicalisation of natal care, she suggested that the natural delivery of babies is becoming less common, and that women are becoming increasingly less involved in the rationalisation of their anti-natal care, and while this may have had a positive impact on the mortality rates for both mother and child, it also negatively impacts on a woman's autonomy regarding the course of her pregnancy. Wolf (2003) agrees, she stated that

at the point of her child's delivery, "the birthing process was so technologized that the notion that "I" was there to give "birth" seemed like sort of a virtual aside" (p.137). According to Oakley (2005) women are increasingly being regarded as being merely the vessel which carries the growing foetus and all decisions on its care and eventual delivery are made, not by the woman herself, but by a subjective, largely, patriarchal medical fraternity. Labour she states is becoming "as invisible as women" (p.119).

Professional and economic power.

The importance of a woman's identity has already been reviewed, but coexistent with this is the power she is able to exert, both economically and personally. When she becomes a mother, suddenly the structures which have supported her autonomy and control are, to a large degree, removed. She is no longer the 'teacher' or the 'lawyer' with the influence that her professional status and salary provide, she is someone's mother whose fiscal independence has either been severely inhibited or cut off entirely. This two pronged attack has the ability to alter both how she sees herself and how she is viewed by society. In so many cases, this detrimental shift in a woman's life is, according to Sikes (1997), a prevailing attitude that is well documented by feminists in many societies. Sikes (ibid.) describes how these campaigners believe that motherhood can be both a dangerous and oppressive role because it defines women "solely in terms of their ability to give birth; [and] it casts them in a subordinate role" (p.42). Friedan (1963) also acknowledges the dilemma and uses the analogy of Nora, the character in Ibsen's 'A Doll's House', who, tired of being a 'doll wife,' longed to regain the power of being a human 'just like her husband', because, states Friedan, "a man's place was in the world and his world was widening" (p.60) so if a woman was to be regarded as being fully human then she too must resist the pressure to be contained within the four walls of her home and move

forward into the world and develop her mind. In doing so she would realise that her existence is under her own control and that she would no longer need to be dependent upon a man.

It is not however only the independence of her thoughts and the development of her mind that is expanded when a mother resumes her career, it is also the power of economic independence. The power which accompanies economic gravitas is recognised by Oakley (2005) who states that “power lies where money is” (p.148). She suggested that many of the women who contributed to her research, quickly found that the ‘bed of roses’ which was promised to them when they became pregnant, soon became a cradle of thorns once the baby had been delivered. Left at home and robbed both of their financial independence and their social freedom a woman’s confidence and emotional stability becomes destabilised and holds the potential for a breakdown of both their parental relationships and their marriages. According to Oakley (ibid.) the birth of a mother’s first child can not only has the potential to unite a couple, it can also divide them, because the loss of power and economic dependence that a woman undergoes is often matched by an emotional dependence which may become an unwelcome burden on both partners in the relationship (p.148).

Marital power.

Another area which appeared to illustrate Lily’s loss of power, was in her relationship with her partner and the dynamic of that relationship which was played out within the confines of her home. While it could be argued that remaining at home may allow a woman power and control of the day to day running of the house, it is an autonomy which, according to de Beauvoir (1949) and Friedan (1963), is superficial. Any feeling of power which this self-rule might afford is soon usurped by the reality of the tedium of their situation and their loss of freedom. Research carried out by Oakley (1979; 2005) and Badinter (2011) illustrates the

imbalance and reluctance of men to contribute to the equality and sharing of work within the home. Friedan (1963) writes passionately about the lives of women who are subjugated to this role, arguing that their power and self-determination is systematically destroyed and that this loss of power and autonomy gradually descends into a state of dependency and passivity which ultimately causes them to suffer “ a slow death of mind and spirit” (p.248). Wolf (2003) suggests that even if they have previously enjoyed an equilibrium of domestic roles, this is shifted when a woman becomes a mother, “with the baby’s arrival, social and economic pressures conspire with a kind of internal vulnerability to shunt the woman back into a more dependent role” (p.227). Asher (2011), I believe, captures the bleakness of the situation by suggesting that motherhood is accompanied by “unique penalties that we have no choice but to accept” (p.138), and it leads to a dampening resistance and the eventual “signing up to our own subordination” (p.139). Many of the women surveyed for her research complained how the inequality of their home life and their fiscal dependency on their partners had led to a loss of power and status, they were resigned to the notion that it was merely “the price they had to pay” for becoming a mother and accepting of the belief that it was “just the way it is” (p.138).

Re-empowerment.

But not all women allow themselves to succumb to the penalties which motherhood can bestow, or if they do, like Lily, they summon their intellectual and psychological resources to fight against this tide of disempowerment before they submerge completely and drown in the sea of apathy as envisaged by Friedan (1963). For these women motherhood can be a time of growth and development, a focus for re-empowerment, because, having nurtured and delivered the child within her womb, she accepts that she is now responsible for another entity and will seek to protect and defend it for the rest of her life. As Sikes (1997) acknowledges, the realisation of the importance and enormity of this task can be a catalyst for empowerment.

Some of the women in her study suggested that motherhood helped them to reclaim a positive female identity and that previous feelings of subordination were cast aside to be replaced by a 'specialness' and a "sort of psychic, if not actual power" (p.43). According to Oakley's (2005) research, one in three mothers suggested that by the fifth month of their pregnancy they had a stronger notion of themselves and felt "proud, useful, important and passionate" (p.142). This view is also supported by Kristeva, who, while acknowledging the problems, the compromises and the destabilising effect of a mother's positioning in the symbolic order, also argues that motherhood can deliver extreme influence, because through her maternal experience a woman is able to ensure the continuity of the very existence of society, which is possibly the ultimate signification of power (as cited by McAfee, 2004). Even de Beauvoir (1949) who raged about the social and institutional inequality that motherhood confers, recognises the creative power which motherhood can also bestow on women, and acknowledges that unless her situation is absolutely dire, "the mother will find her life enriched by her child" (p.526).

Theory would suggest therefore, that if a mother can harness the power which derives from the maternal and combine it with the power which emanates from her professional standing and economic autonomy, she has the potential for true fulfilment, to realise de Beauvoir's (1949) dream of what it is to be a "free woman", to be "permitted to take her chances in her own interests and in the interests of all" (p. 724).

Chapter Three: The First Trimester

Introduction.

The data which has been gathered and selected for inclusion in the first trimester of my study was collected during the pre-natal period of Lily's pregnancy. At the time of collection she was working as a full-time classroom teacher with responsibility for the English curriculum throughout Key Stage Two. The samples have been chosen to illustrate her understanding and personal perception of her pregnancy and its impact on her professional, social and emotional lived experience. The data is followed with my own personal reflexive account of the topics under discussion.

3.1 The Transformation

From field notes made following the confirmation of Lily's pregnancy.

These field notes were made following a discussion I had with Lily during the first trimester of her pregnancy. After conferring with her and my tutors regarding the prospective content of my research, we met for a planned meeting which was focused on a conversation related to the circumstances surrounding the confirmation of her pregnancy. Keen to ease her into the participant research process, I decided that an informal discussion containing some semi-structured questions would be appropriate, however it quickly emerged that Lily was quite relaxed and happy to relate the circumstances surrounding her pregnancy in a story like manner. To maintain the relaxed atmosphere, I chose not to tape the interview, I did however make field notes, which were written up immediately following the discussion and these form the basis of this critical narrative. While I had previously been aware of some of the data which emerged, there were a number of disclosures which she revealed for the first time.

Background:

During the school summer break, Lily and her husband had decided to try for a baby. Since the age of nineteen, following an emergency procedure which resulted in the loss of one of her ovaries, to protect the health of her remaining ovary, her gynaecologist had prescribed continuous use of Dianette, a contraceptive pill used to prevent ovulation and possible ovarian trauma. Naturally, in order to stand any chance of a pregnancy Lily had to curb the taking of this medication. She and her husband decided at this point to let nature take its course.

Excerpts from the discussion:

I began by asking Lily why she and her husband, Richard, had felt that this was the right time to start a family. Wasn't it a little early in her career to do this? (I am aware of my personal view i.e. that she should establish and progress her career further before considering the responsibilities of becoming a mother). She replied that it was not a decision they had taken lightly. She described this time as being a period of great excitement. She had not been worried that a pregnancy would be in any way detrimental to her career prospects – if anything she felt motherhood would enhance her understanding of children in her care, a view shared by Sikes (1997). Although she acknowledged it would be tiring, it was something she was prepared for. She continued by telling me how, following on from the summer break, she had returned to school full of enthusiasm for the year ahead. The new academic year was well under way and the day to day organisation of her year six classroom appeared to be running smoothly. She recalled how well her teaching career was progressing. Added responsibilities had been given to her by the Head teacher in recognition of her good practice and she had been made an English Mentor for the Local Education Authority (LEA).

“Life was really good Mum”. [at this point I observed a change to her facial expression and her mood appeared to darken slightly]. She continued by

recalling how one day in late autumn, as she prepared her resources for that afternoon's lessons, a nagging pain in her side grew steadily worse. At first she thought this might be the onset of her menstrual cycle, but this was not the case. She explained how this intermittent pain continued for the following two weeks. At this juncture I interjected and asked why she hadn't told me. (I am aware that I feel upset that she hadn't felt able to confide in me). She replied "I'd brought enough worry to your door over the years – I didn't want to be the cause of anymore".

She continued to recount how she had carried on until one morning, during a period of non-contact time, her Head teacher called her into her office. She asked her if anything was worrying her, because she was aware of a change in her demeanour and wanted to know if it was school related, and if so, whether she may be able to help.

"This is when I went into meltdown, I started to cry". She explained how she confided in her Head teacher her worry that the pains she had been feeling were in fact reminiscent of the pain she had experienced prior to losing her right ovary. "I was terrified it was happening all over again".

Fortunately her Head teacher took control of the situation and encouraged her to seek immediate medical advice. I asked her again why on earth she had not confided in me. (I realise at this point of the discussion my role as a researcher is being compromised and I try to draw back). Following a short, but opportune refreshment break we resumed our discussion. I asked her to continue by recalling what happened after she had contacted her doctor. She went on to disclose that an arranged visit to the radiology department at her local community hospital did little to alleviate her worry.

“God Mum, the radiographer looked at the scan and said ‘it’s not looking great, there seems to be some sort of blockage in your ovary and fallopian tube. I’d recommend you see your gynaecologist as soon as you can”. I asked her whether a radiographer was allowed to be as blunt as that. (I am conscious that I feel Lily may be being overdramatic). She insisted that she had been and added that she [the radiographer] had also recommended that if she could afford to go privately it would speed up the consultation.

Lily made the phone call and was seen by Mr. K, her gynaecologist at his evening clinic later that week. She explained how the stress of her situation was only marginally relieved by this appointment. He confirmed that the ovary did not look particularly healthy and the chances of a natural pregnancy were ‘slim’, but he told her not to worry as In-vitro Fertilisation (IVF) treatment was available and, as there was no current waiting list, he would recommend her immediate acceptance on to the programme. In the meantime, he recommended certain practices which could purportedly enhance the chances of a natural pregnancy and asked her to return in two weeks’ time.

“So that’s what I did. In a strange way, it took the pressure and worry off me. I even had a spritzer and the odd cigarette of an evening. In fact Richard said I was more relaxed than he’d seen me in ages. I think it was because Mr. K had told me we could have IVF”.

On the 17th December 2012 Lily returned to the clinic and Mr. K performed a routine ultrasound scan to check the ongoing health of her ovary.

“He seemed to take ages. Then he said, ‘Well Lily, you seemed to have managed it all by yourselves, well done. There is your baby! ... Now go home and try to enjoy it”! I observed how the recalling of this occasion

is obviously an emotional moment for her and she rubs her tummy protectively.

I am suddenly aware that here in front of me my daughter is already undergoing the transformation from being a daughter to becoming a mother and I am proud, but also a little sad – aware that although I will be gaining a grandchild, I may be losing a little more of my own child and I question whether this will change the dynamic of our relationship.

The discussion draws to a close with Lily describing how she can't wait, this is all she has ever wanted. Her happiness is palpable.

Analysis and Discussion

During the discussion and later in the course of the analysis, I was conscious of the emergence of personal feelings and interpretations. I would suggest that my emotional response was a reflection of my own maternal feelings which were surfacing, for although I was wearing my 'researcher's hat' the research participant is my daughter and while I worked hard to maintain a professional stance, internally my maternal distress had been stirred. Such feelings of anxiety, are recognised by Etherington (2004) as being a tangible feature of reflexive research and she believes that researchers in my position should not be swayed by such dilemmas. She suggests that rather than questioning the familiarity of the research conditions, researchers like myself, should embrace the opportunity of being able to demonstrate in our work the "full interaction between ourselves and our participants so that our work can be understood not only in terms of *what* we have discovered, but *how* we have discovered it" (p. 32). Pillow (2003) also comments on the significance of such a situation. She believes that we need to talk about how we position ourselves within the reflexive research process because it affords us the opportunity to "impact, open up or limit the possibilities for critical representations" (p.177) and she supports the view adopted by ChiseriStrater who stated that reflexivity

demands some “self-conscious awareness of the process of self-scrutiny” (as cited by Pillow, 2003, p. 177).

Having offered an opinion regarding the subjectivity of my research position, my analysis of the data continues by focussing on the worry and concern which Lily displayed prior to the confirmation of her pregnancy. According to the research findings of Boivin, Griffiths and Venetis (2011) these feelings of anxiety are typical of many women who are in a similar position to Lily. Their study suggested that women who fear that they may be infertile, or those who are definitely facing a future without children, are susceptible to depressive symptoms which may include feelings of sadness, anxiety and loss. In an almost vicious cycle of events, these women are often burdened with the additional worry that the emotional stress they are feeling is also contributing to their infertility. Unfortunately these women appear to be suffering from a self-imposed, self-perpetuating cycle of high emotional anxiety which ironically, according to Boivin et.al. (ibid.), has no proven bearing on their ability to conceive. The data however would suggest that Lily too held on to this misconception. Having been given ‘permission’ by her gynaecologist to side-line her emotional distress, she too associated her ‘relaxed’ state, buoyed by the promise of IVF, as being the catalyst for the natural conception of her baby. As previously stated, although there is no scientific evidence to support this theory, the research findings of Porter and Bhattacharya (2007) suggest that this emotional conviction is a commonly held belief amongst the majority of couples hoping to achieve a pregnancy. Their study illustrated how nine out of ten of their research participants believed that relaxation was a key component to enhancing their chances of achieving a natural conception. They also reported how this misapprehension was even prevalent among couples enrolled on a programme of IVF. Similarly convinced of the benefits of a relaxation, these couples advocated that the medical intervention (IVF) had probably only been successful because of the additional relaxation techniques they had combined with their

treatment. Wolf (2003) would appear to agree, recalling her own experience, she decided to counter her conception difficulties by finding a doctor who believed that “the mind and the body worked together” (p.46) and appears convinced that this was the important factor in the successful conception of her own child.

Having achieved her goal of pregnancy, the almost triumphant way in which Lily related her news [that she had conceived her baby naturally] would support the studies carried out by Porter and Bhattacharya (2007) and Sikes (1997), who suggested that for women worried by issues of infertility, a natural conception offered them a sense of empowerment. After months or possibly years of being a relatively “passive recipient,” a sort of autonomy is reclaimed, because, from this point forward, a woman is responsible for another, and that responsibility more than any other, enables an empowerment to grow within her which she utilises to love and nurture the child within her womb.

3.2 Striving for perfection.

This excerpt is extracted from the journal kept by Lily during the course of her pregnancy. It is a clear illustration of the internal battle she was experiencing with regards to the changes happening to her, both professionally and emotionally.

Background.

At the time of writing, Lily was twenty weeks pregnant and for the past four weeks she and her colleagues had been preparing for their Estyn inspection. The inspection team arrived on a morning in early March 2013. The atmosphere at school was understandably tense. Following three days of monitoring and questioning by a team of five inspectors [Estyn plus the Diocesan Religious Education Inspector], Lily headed for home. She called me on her mobile and although she sounded exhausted and relieved that it was all over, I was concerned

that alongside these expected reactions, her emotional disposition appeared to be a combination of euphoria tinged by melancholia. Her diary entry would appear to support my supposition.

Excerpt from Lily's Journal: March 2013

I don't know whether to feel happy or distraught at this moment. In fact, what should be the most wonderful moment of the past few weeks has suddenly become a real source of sadness!

So ... I'm free! After days and months of constant worrying and panic, striving for perfection to prove my worth, the dreaded inspection is over and done. Gone. Finito! I am so exhausted I can barely move, yet at the same time I feel like I floated home in some dream like haze. I did it! I got through! I got through and came out with the plaudits I dreamed of! People actually think I'm good, that I'm doing a something right for these children no matter how shit I feel at times or how much I've beaten myself up for the things I'm not doing. The 'all-nighters', holidays spent in school and working all weekend - were worth it in the end.

So why, as I made my way home have I spent the journey sobbing? Why have I spent two hours breaking my heart to Richard? Well the truth is I just don't know what the point of it all was. Why? I have worked myself to the bone, ignored my responsibilities as a wife, neglected family and friends and left nothing for myself. But most importantly, above all else, this tiny little life growing inside me, this beautiful baby I've waited for, for so long, I have metaphorically pushed aside for my career. Put it to one side so I could do whatever it took to get the top grade, no matter the cost to my health or personal life.

The hopes and dream I prayed for and spent so much of my life pining for, have come second to my career with rearranged hospital appointments and a room still waiting to be put together, piled up and dumped whilst school work needed to be done. The truth is I feel so disappointed with myself and so lost as to where I go now...

Following my final lesson observation and a surge of hormones, I tearfully dragged the lead inspector into my classroom to identify the ways I believe I might have improved my teaching when it didn't reach the standards I have set myself. Between sobs he reassured me of his knowledge of my standard, but stopped me ... gesturing to the little bump I cradled absent-mindedly. He told me that he had many regrets, despite reaching the pinnacle of his career. He told me the story of his family and how his son had often asked him where he had been when he needed him and whether the children he dedicated his life to were more important than his own son.

My heart broke... I was hysterical, the cold, hard realisation of my failing hitting me smack in the face. He continued to ask me to think of this little baby and to not be so hard on myself, to make time for my family and most importantly for this child. His words hit me like a sledgehammer. He was right. A man who had known me for all of three days and had had only one real encounter, had seen through it all and called me on it. I am failing this little baby and it isn't even here yet.

Analysis and discussion.

Apart from the physical and emotional distress which Lily appears to be suffering from following a rigorous school inspection, her written account would also suggest that she is experiencing a crisis of identity. Not secure in her own perception of having taught a good lesson (as assumed from the inspector's comments and later verified through the verbal

feedback and written report) she felt an overwhelming and uncontrollable urge to validate her competence. These apparent feelings of poor self-efficacy appeared to be impacting on her perception of her teaching role, which according to the research of Erdwins, Buffardi, Casper and O'Brien (2001) can result in role strain/overload. In their research, which focused on working mothers, they defined 'role overload' as being, the woman suffering from an overall sense of being overwhelmed, of having so many demands and responsibilities that she feels unable to execute any of them effectively. They suggested that the negative impact and conflict associated with role strain may have the potential to negatively influence certain aspects of a woman's psychological health. It would appear from Lily's journal excerpt that role strain may have been a factor which was impacting on her identity, and the kindly, but misplaced advice of the male inspector only served to pile on the guilt. Wolf (2003) also recalled the guilt that her colleagues subjected her to, by subtly implying that her career aspirations were harming her unborn child (p.64). For Lily, it appeared to have caused her to reach a crisis point, and like the women in Friedan's (1963) research her emotive prose suggest that she considered herself to be inadequate in most aspects of her life – she questioned her identity as a teacher, her identity as a wife and her future identity as a mother. Whether it was due to hormonal changes or the demands of role juggling, Lily appeared to be lacking in confidence, and despite the positive outcome of the inspection, her self-esteem appeared to be low. According to Erdwins et al. (2001) and Jordan (1997), to avoid any further deterioration in her psychological disposition, the support of her family and her colleagues' was essential. Their research suggested that with this form of support, her emotional well-being and confidence could be reinforced, her self-efficacy and issues of identity redeemed and the impact of her role strain alleviated. Failure to address it would almost certainly lead to further periods of anxiety and probable post-natal depression.

Although relevant, her lack of self-esteem or excessive workload may not be the only contributory factors of her melancholia. According to Dunkel-Schetter and Tanner (2012), a recently acknowledged concept - Pregnancy Anxiety, is now considered to be amongst the most potent maternal risk factors for adverse maternal and child outcomes (p. 141). Their research estimated that the prevalence of anxiety/depression during pregnancy can be as high as 16% and they acknowledged the condition as being a “distinct and definable syndrome” which develops from the mother’s innate fears concerning the health and well-being of her unborn child and of the enormity of her impending parenting and maternal role (p.143). Not only can this result in pre-term births and low birth weight, but it also has the potential for adverse implications for foetal neurodevelopment. Their research also suggested that this condition is more common amongst women who have struggled with fertility issues and they further suggest that if these women fall victim to it, it will, ironically, impair the quality and effectiveness of their parenting skills during the postpartum period of their maternity (p.144). Conversely, earlier research by Seglow and Canham (1999) argued against this theory and suggested that such fears and anxieties are all part of the typical pattern of a pregnancy. They cited a personal communication with Klauber, a prominent psychoanalyst working with mothers and their children, who stated that “at the very time when parents need to feel most grown up, they often feel most like babies themselves – full of worries and misgivings about their capacities”. They describe how, in his opinion, these feelings are not only common, they are in fact necessary, and that in order to respond appropriately to the needs of their baby,

Parents need to be in touch with what it feels like to be a baby, so that their more adult aspect can respond appropriately ... it is a sign of maturity to be able to *feel* like a baby, yet not be so overwhelmed by it that one becomes *like* a baby. (Klauber, as cited by Seglow and Canham, 1999, p.18).

Whatever the root cause of her melancholia was, stress and anxiety is a particular concern for MS sufferers like Lily. Widely acknowledged as having a damaging effect on a patient's ability to fight the disease (MS Society, 2015), Lily's psychological well-being was becoming a primary concern. If, as previously suggested, emotional regression is required it would appear that she would do well to draw on her professional experience. Using the analogy of a child struggling to cope with the demands of the school curriculum, Lily should work in collaboration to write her own Individual Education Plan (IEP). This metaphorical life plan should focus on achievable targets, allow others to assist in its provision, meet her needs and ultimately work towards effecting a successful outcome i.e. the restoration of her self-belief and inner-confidence and in turn the healthy and successful delivery of her baby. To continue the analogy, it would appear that this young teacher now needed to become the pupil. For her, pregnancy was an entirely new field of study and though she may struggle with certain aspects of her understanding and application, she, I believe, has the ability to achieve an A*.

In conclusion, and continuing the analogy, I would suggest that the personal comment at the bottom of her end of year [pre-natal] report should read:

Lily is a hardworking and conscientious student. If however she is to achieve her true potential (of being a happy, contented working mother) she must further develop her listening skills and accept the support and encouragement offered by her teachers and family.

3.3 Today I'm going to become a mummy.

Letter to Mum and Dad

This letter was written on the 16th July 2013, in the early hours of the morning, when Lily was going into hospital for an elective caesarean. It was left on my bedside table following a visit made by her and her husband at 6.00am, after they had called to say goodbye before registering at the maternity wing of the hospital. I found the letter after she had left.

Background.

The months prior to this procedure appear to have been a period of anxiety for Lily. She had undergone weekly foetal growth scans which were also interspersed with episodes of foetal monitoring to screen the heart rate of the baby she was carrying. Her level of stress was further exacerbated when at thirty four weeks, during the final trimester of her pregnancy, Oligohydramnios, a leakage of the amniotic fluid surrounding her baby, was suspected. Her consultant advised her that left unmonitored/untreated this disorder could pose a risk to the developing foetus, primarily affecting the health and growth of its lungs, a condition medically referred to as Pulmonary Hypoplasia. He also advised her of his additional concern, namely that this condition also had the potential to effect the early delivery of her baby. In preparation for the possibility of a premature birth an injection was administered to enhance the development of her baby's lungs, thus affording it the best opportunity for successful independence from its mother's umbilical cord.

In school Lily and her colleagues had undergone an Estyn inspection and while her excellence had been acknowledged by the team of inspectors, the experience had left her tired and depleted of energy. Her natal team arranged for her to undergo a ward based assessment with a neurologist. Faced with the unwelcome prospect of delivering her baby at thirty four weeks

and having researched the possible outcomes and survival rates for babies born at this stage of gestation, Lily promised her consultant that she would rest and undergo daily monitoring at her local community hospital. Her Head teacher was fully supportive of this precautionary action, ensuring supply cover for her classroom during her periods of absence and therefore a welcome degree of reassurance for Lily regarding the welfare of her pupils. But Lily's health appeared to be an issue of growing concern. Her consultant, Mr C, considered the probable complications of related stress and anxiety a possible danger, and he made the decision to 'bring this baby into the world a little earlier than expected'. He was also unambiguous in his conclusion that the rigour of a vaginal delivery may further compromise both Lily's health and that of her baby and therefore determined that an elective caesarean would provide the best outcome. Lily was directed to register at the maternity unit at her local hospital at 7.00 am on the morning of 16th July 2013. Medically the wheels were being put into motion.

Excerpts from the edited letter: 16th July 2013

Mum and Dad

Today is probably the scariest, most amazing day of my life. I cannot explain to you the mix of emotions I feel, especially after putting myself through years of self-imposed anxiety, never believing I would have this opportunity (not that I like to cause myself unnecessary angst!) Yet despite all this, today I am going to become a mummy.

I know with all my heart I will love this little one. I have waited so long to meet it and just seeing its first little heartbeat in that hospital room put an end to so much of the fear and pain I had carried with me.

I look back now and I know that so many of the issues and sadness I carried with me are down to my fears that I would never do this ... to love someone that was a little bit of me and a little bit of someone else ...all I can hope for is that I am good enough for the challenge.

Analysis and discussion.

Part of a two page letter, these extracts have been selected to demonstrate the level of anxiety that Lily experienced leading up to the final stage of her pregnancy and to identify the fears, obstacles and dilemmas which appear to have worried her as she prepared for the imminent arrival of her baby.

Initial examination of the text would suggest that Lily was in a reflective phase, she positioned all her problems, both real and perceived, that had gone before and appeared to suggest that with the arrival of her baby all of these past worries would be put to one side. However, subliminally the data would suggest, that mindful of the weight of responsibility of bringing a new life into the world, the fears, anxieties and obstacles which formed part of her past were merely being replaced by a different set of fears, anxieties and obstacles for her future. Throughout the transcript, the linguistic language adopted by Lily would suggest that she was nervous and confused. Her overtly emotive language in her description of the impending birth suggests a desire to stress the enormity of what she was doing. The constant repetition of her use of 'I' and 'love' demonstrated her need to emphasise her anxieties.

The emergent themes of this letter appeared to be those of sadness, anxiety and hope. Sadness for the past worries which had impacted on her dream of being a mother; anxiety for the potential obstacles which may impede her being a 'good enough' mother and hope that the birth of her baby will be a focus for her love and ultimate fulfilment. What noticeably emerges

from the data, is Lily's reflective anxiety concerning her medical history. It would appear that she blames herself for the medical issues over which she had no control and which initiated deep set, but misconceived notions of infertility. Her sense of identity appears to have been submerged beneath feelings of sadness and despair, but now she believes that her pregnancy and the imminent birth of her baby offers her the opportunity to transform her life, to dispense with the worries of her prenatal status and re-establish herself in her new role as a mother. In some ways it would appear that she too is being reborn. Her desire for control and agency concerning her future role as a mother is however tempered by issues of self-doubt and even though she has been the autonomous vessel which has nurtured this child to the point of delivery, she expresses her concerns as to whether she will be a 'good-enough' mother.

Lily's desire to become a mother is, according to Badinter (2011), an entirely natural phenomena. She suggests that 'for most women, a life without children is unthinkable' and she cites the example of Pontoreau who described her longing to have children as being a kind of "compulsion, an irrational longing deep in me and very hard to explain ... a deep, powerful, indestructible desire ... autonomous, irrevocable, visceral" (p.120). The impassioned language of her letter would suggest, that Lily too shared these innate feelings of maternal emotion. The fear and anxiety she exhibits concerning her ability to rise to the challenge of motherhood is recognised by Hoang (2014) as being a common feature of many pregnancies and is also acknowledged by the research findings of Possamai-Inesedy (2006) who suggest that the changes the mother is experiencing, both physically and emotionally, produce heightened feelings of anxiety and responsibility. Theodorou and Spyrou (2013) would appear to agree. They suggest that the pregnant woman is confronted with "an acute awareness about the existence of another person, namely the baby, whose life is now central to the mother's existence and whose needs are prioritised and are above hers" (p.86). In fact they suggest that the joy and happiness of a welcomed pregnancy is frequently tempered by overwhelming

feelings of anxiety, vulnerability and “perceptions of risk” which may often become “a defining marker and a fundamental feature of the maternal project” (p. 85).

Towards the conclusion of the letter, hidden amongst the excitement of her baby’s imminent arrival was fear. Similar to the women in Oakley’s study (1979 and 2005), the trajectory of her pregnancy had taken a new route and now even the method of delivery was being dictated to by circumstance. Wolf (2003), too recalled the way her ‘planned’ delivery was hijacked by medical intervention suggests that during her delivery, “I was an adjunct; I almost had no role” (p.137). Cusk (2008) also provides a vivid description of the fear she felt, when like Lily she was ‘encouraged’, for the safe arrival of her precious cargo, to surrender the delivery of her baby into the hands of others. What should have been a natural conclusion to the nurturing of the infant in her womb, a shared experience between mother and child, for her, became a public and somewhat surreal experience. She defined it as being a “transfer of significance” (p.48) and recalled how as her ‘dead’ body lay on the operating table and the baby was pulled from her, “livid and blue ... her face a rictus of shock and fear,” desperate to claw back some remnant of involvement she consoled herself with the idea that despite the “lack of proper passage ... only she knew the secret of her [the baby’s] tranquillity, the floating world of her gestation” (ibid). Such evocative emotion would appear to be a prime example of maternal immersion, “she is the baby and the baby is her” (Winnicott, 1987, p.6) and in a similar way to Lily, despite the fact that she was dependent upon the intervention of the skilled medical team to ensure the safe delivery of her baby, she clung on to the notion of maternal intimacy, through their shared experience she defended the uniqueness of her identity - mother to this new born child.

In a similar way to Cusk, Lily too appeared to have recognised that decisions and actions are sometimes taken, which might not have been of her choosing but which have to be accepted,

because the wellbeing of her child was her paramount concern. As Rich (1986) so powerfully articulated, to be a mother one faces a whole myriad of charged emotions – “in body and soul” but we do so because “that child is a piece of oneself “(p.22).

3.4 It’s so hard to let go.

Two Excerpts from my personal journal.

These journal entries were made by me during the final days of Lily’s pregnancy. Her current role as a classroom teacher had ended and at thirty six weeks gestation she had begun her maternity leave. Unfortunately due to commitments at school and supposed difficulties surrounding the viability of her pregnancy, the period of time from finishing in school and the delivery of her baby was limited to three days. Her period of preparation and adjustment was minimal.

Background to first journal excerpt.

Lily had hoped and anticipated that she would be able to fulfil her teaching commitment to her Year Six class and begin her maternity leave at the end of the summer term. Her neo-natal consultant, had advised her to finish work the week commencing 8th July 2013 at the latest. However, Lily was the only practicing Catholic (other than the Head teacher) in her denominational school and she had been given the responsibility of organising and producing the ‘Farewell Mass’ and ‘Whole School Celebration’ (the Diocesan Bishop and clergy, Governors, pupils and parents), for her Head teacher who was retiring at the end of the school year – a logistical feat which the Chairman of Governors felt only Lily was capable of accomplishing. Conscientious in her duties and out of loyalty to her Head teacher who had supported and acknowledged her ability, Lily decided to postpone her maternity leave until

her commitment had been satisfied. The first excerpt is taken from my personal journal entry on Monday 15th July, the first day of Lily's maternity leave and the day before her elective caesarean.

Journal excerpt: Monday 15th July 2013.

Spent the morning at the maternity unit with Lily having pre-op monitoring and check. The day has been hot! We decided to spend the afternoon having lunch at an Italian eatery that Lily particularly likes. It was going to be the last time really that it was just me and her – it's an exciting time, but also sad. I love the time we spend together and even though the thought of my grandchild arriving is thrilling, I know my relationship with Lily is about to undergo a change. Half way through the meal, Elizabeth [my sister] turned up. We spent the time talking about the changes that motherhood brings and the changes that are ahead for Lily.

Background to the second journal excerpt.

This excerpt is taken from my journal the day Lily went into hospital for her elective caesarean. She had visited me and her father earlier that morning and had to register at the maternity unit by 7.00 am. She was scheduled for theatre at approximately 10.30am, the second of four mothers undergoing surgery that morning. My notes were written later that evening.

Journal excerpt: Tuesday 16th July 2013.

Lily and Richard called round early this morning ... she was going in to have an elective caesarean. Mr C suggested that it would take about an hour (yesterday they had anticipated that she was going to be second on the list so

possibly going down to theatre at around 10.30am). When they left I went upstairs to find she had left a letter ... I cried!

By 12.00 noon I was beside myself- still no news. What had happened? My husband was calm. He kept telling me to stop worrying, everything would be fine. But would it? Was Lily's baby ok? Was Lily okay? My irrational behaviour was clearly annoying my husband.

Finally! At 1.15pm a text from Richard... "You have a granddaughter – 6lb 4oz. mother and baby both doing beautifully!" My husband was stoic, but pleased. I cried with relief.

Analysis and discussion.

On close inspection of the first of my journal excerpts it would appear that like Lily, I too am experiencing issues of anxiety and a crisis of identity. While she struggled with her maternal identity, I seem to be wrestling with the transition from being a mother into becoming a grandmother. Kitzinger (1996) acknowledges the dilemma. She defined it as being a "major life transition without any understanding of what it entailed" (p.8) and describes how one is "nudged ... into a different generation, and the simple act of someone getting pregnant changes your view of yourself and alters relationships with those close to you" (ibid. p.15). This is hardly surprising. In June 1986, my identity as daughter and wife had mutated from being a dyad into a trinity of personas. From being a wife and a teacher I assumed the additional role of mother and I found it to be as demanding as it was rewarding. I was obliged to undertake a transformation of self and psychologically establish a maternal identity which was unique to my daughter, which throughout each stage of her life, evolved and diversified (Mercer, 2004). Now here I was, twenty seven years later, having to change again. Not only was I undergoing a possible crisis of identity, I believe I was also experiencing feelings of

anxiety and apprehension at the prospect of facing change at a much later stage of my life. Unfortunately for those around me, my anxiety manifested itself in my fractious conduct and irritability. I was, suggests Kitinger (1996), in a state of limbo, propelled “into territory yet unmapped ... on marginal land, picking [my] way over ground that lies between motherhood and being a respected “tribal elder” (p.16).

Despite, however, the anxiety I was suffering in the first of my journal entries, it would appear from the subsequent journal excerpt that any misgivings which I may have previously experienced had been quickly put to one side. Thankfully, I now appear to have adopted a level of perspective. Concern for the wellbeing of my daughter and her baby had required me to prioritise, and the distress and anguish which appeared to overwhelm me, are a clear acknowledgement of my maternal identity and the love I have for both my daughter and her child. Cusk (2008) describes maternal love as being the blueprint for all loves ... a re-enactment, a revision, an investigation of self-love (p.90). On reflection I would suggest that my maternal identity had not been usurped, it was intact and, according to Mercer (2004,) was still evolving. She suggests that becoming a mother does not begin and end with the birth of a child, it is a process which continues and evolves throughout one’s life. Winnicott, (1987) however, a leading psychoanalyst in mother – child relationships during the first half of the twentieth century, disagrees. While he preached extensively regarding the attachment anxieties for the first five years of a child’s life, he appears more dismissive of a mother’s feelings. He appears to suggest that in his opinion the permanency of maternal investment is only transitory. He describes a pregnancy as being a period in a woman’s life in which:

She finds out one day that she becomes a hostess to a new human being who has decided to take up lodgings and ... exercises a crescendo of demands till some date in the far-extended future when there will once again be peace and

quiet; and they, these women, may return to self-expression of a more direct kind. (Winnicott, 1987, p.5).

Although a leading figure in his field, many have criticised him, and I would suggest that as a man, he was never able to fully identify with the maternal experience. While his words may have carried weight, his body had not borne the weight of a child and the philosophy he supported was simply hypothesis which has since been the subject of much criticism (Tizzard, 2009). He had not nurtured and supported a child in his womb or given birth to a child. Only a female is genetically capable of childbirth and therefore fully cognisant of what it is to be a biological mother. As Rich (1986) acknowledges, “we carry the imprint of this experience for life, even unto dying” (p.11). It changes a woman “her body has undergone irreversible changes, her mind will never be the same, her future as a woman has been shaped by the event” (p.12). I recognise this in my relationship with my own mother and I fully anticipate it in my relationship with my daughter. No matter what additional requests may be asked of me as a grandmother, first and foremost I will always be Lily’s ‘mum’. Billington (1994) would appear to agree. She suggests that the most significant point about being a mother is that you are a mother for all time – “once a mother always a mother” (p.123), and this mothering instinct has no time limitations and knows no boundaries. As Kitinger (1996) poignantly states “you go on being a mother to your adult children until you die” (p.17). So, although my future role as a grandmother may be unfamiliar, my existing role as a mother remains perpetual.

3.5 My reflexive appraisal of the first trimester

The intimate nature of the discussions included in my data are a natural feature of the warm relationship which exists between Lily and myself. Our rapport is such that Lily often confides

in me and is secure in the knowledge that I will safeguard her disclosures. I am conscious therefore that my role as a researcher is becoming an increasingly surreptitious presence in our discussions - a 'spy in the camp.' Although I believe that I am ethically secure in my field work notation, (I interject at salient points and question if Lily objects to the making of these notes), I am also cognisant of the fact that my dissemination of this data will lay bare the most intimate private thoughts and worries of this young woman, whom, as her mother, I have always sought to protect. From a personal perspective I recognise that I am also challenged by aspects of the data which have revealed evidence of Lily's actions and thought processes which I have found unsettling and which have provoked in me unexpected feelings of sadness, loss, frustration and fear.

My recollection of the telephone conversation cited in the second extract (Striving for Perfection) differs from the data which Lily presented in her journal. I had been pleased and congratulatory towards Lily concerning her success and empathetic and cajoling regarding her misgivings, but as I read and analysed her journal entry I feel an overriding reaction of my own maternal irritability. I understand that hormonal changes will have played a significant role in her emotional collapse, but as a woman, as her mother, I wanted to take her to task, to tell her to have pride in what she had achieved and to stop diminishing herself. I wanted to tell her that no matter how well intended and kindly the inspector's words to her were, she should never have given anyone the opportunity to suggest that she was in anyway failing the child that she was nurturing within her womb. I was angry that in spite of the advancement in equal opportunities for women to continue their career since my experience some twenty eight years earlier, similar disparaging attitudes prevailed, even if they were couched in kindly words. I wanted to tell her how I, as a young teacher in the early 80's, had, both through choice and necessity, worked in full time employment until the thirty-eighth week of pregnancy and returned to work six weeks after her birth and had had to endure the

disapproving comments and derisory remarks of my older female colleagues and relatives, but that I had remained strong. I accepted that these women, many of whom were much older than me, were merely expressing the cultural expectations of the time. They had believed that a mother's place was in the home and had only resumed their career once their children were grown.

But all around me times were changing. In France, second wave feminists like de Beauvoir had fought tenaciously for feminist liberation; in America, Betty Friedan had written passionately of how women should demand more than just the fulfilment gained from nurturing a baby, and here I was now, in 1982, reaping the rewards of the emancipatory harvest they had worked so hard to sow. Although at that time I was largely ignorant of the nuances of their struggle and probably unaware of the debt I owed them, I was adamant in my belief that equality and liberation was a justifiable and accepted right. Probably, on reflection, like many women of my generation, I had ostensibly, by a process almost akin to cultural osmosis, adopted the mantle of feminist values and become part of a cohort of women who naturally assumed the benefits of an increasingly equal opportunistic environment, a society in which women's entitlements were more forcefully implemented. I had become part of a growing mass of women who were independent and confident to continue along a career path I had worked so hard to achieve. For me impending motherhood was both motivational and empowering and I was unwilling to take a backward step into, what I feared would be, domestic oblivion. Emboldened by my academic achievements and my professional success I had no desire to relinquish control, liberation and financial stability just because I was pregnant. I persevered and prevailed against the mutterings of disapproval and gradually earned my colleagues and family's respect. So, now, to read of my daughter's lack of confidence and sadness at her misguided, self-diagnosed suggestion of maternal neglect was frustrating. I wanted to sound a battle cry, rally the sisterhood and plead with her to recognise

and celebrate how much she had already achieved, to raise her self-esteem and encourage her to be confident in the choices she had made.

The fear, anxiety and loss of power that Lily displays in the third section of the data was matched by my own pangs of frustration, loss of power and fear. As she worried about her impending transformation into motherhood, my own maternal position was being severely tested and is laid bare in the final segment of this section of the data. I recall the morning of the 15th July being hot and sticky and very hectic. The hospital we attended is at the best of times a busy hospital, but that day it was impossible to park and we ended up having to walk about half a mile to the maternity wing. I tried to chivvy Lily along, but she was labouring under the weight of her belly, the heat of the day and the duration of the walk. I was disgruntled and moaned about the lack of designated parking for women in Lily's condition; the inefficiencies of the NHS, the inconsiderate nature of the man who blatantly took 'my parking space,' and the heat. In fact, it would be fair to say that I just moaned! In my defence, I suspect that I was just conscious of the limited time we had to spend together and these focuses were merely vents for my frustration. Similarly later that afternoon in the restaurant I complained about the food – it wasn't as tasty as usual, the service was poor and then my sister's unexpected arrival altered the ambiance of our mother/daughter time. On reflection, what had been planned as being a lovely day together, before Lily's transformative role into motherhood, had turned into a frustrating, dissatisfying event which I had played an active role in sabotaging. Conscious of the effect that my mood may be having, I tried to appear 'light and bouncy' but I was subdued and as my sister and I reminisced with Lily about our experiences of becoming new mothers, I was aware of being consumed by the sadness of the reality that that particular chapter of my life suddenly seemed so far in the distance. I recall glancing at an elderly lady sitting at the table opposite. Each of us commented how charming it was to see such an independent and vital lady of her advanced years being happy to sit alone

in a busy restaurant enjoying a plate of pasta and a glass of wine. On reflection, I now realise that as I glanced over at that old lady, I saw the apprehension of my future. That day in the restaurant seemed to be the closing of a metaphoric door on the purely, maternal phase of my life - my menopausal capitulation. I was no longer going to be just a 'Mum' - I was metamorphosing into a 'Granny'!

But as is evident in the second of my journal entries, just because I was on the verge of becoming a grandmother it did not allay my maternal fears for my daughter's safety. I would suggest that it is normal for mothers to worry about their children and unfortunately, for me, history has been a cruel teacher. Past experience has taught me to remain cautious and not rely on happy endings especially where Lily's health is concerned. An inconsequential bladder infection being monitored in a University hospital (while Lily was away studying) suddenly became an emergency which culminated in a cancer scare and the loss of her ovary. Two years later a numb arm, which the emergency doctor at the local cottage hospital laughingly dismissed as being "a dead arm from sleeping on it heavily," was later diagnosed as Multiple Sclerosis. The supposedly 'normal' can be turned completely on its head by fate. So in my mind by 12.00 noon, the proposed one hour operation, which had been planned for around 10.30am, was well over schedule. Panic set in. What had gone wrong? My inability to control, monitor and rationalise the situation was causing my fertile imagination to descend into chaos of Hobbesian proportions. Thankfully, the text which 'pinged' onto my mobile phone at 1.15pm swept away my fear and anxiety and was replaced by a tidal wave of relief and joy which flooded through my body. My daughter was safe! Her daughter was safe! Any doubts or fears which I may have had were in that split second purged. Third time lucky – Lily was a mother and I was a Granny. Our bond was strengthened not weakened. In the true nature of motherhood at its best, my daughter's happiness was my happiness, and issues of power, dominion and identity had been resolved – hopefully for both of us.

Chapter Four: The Second Trimester.

Introduction.

The data which has been gathered and selected for inclusion in the second trimester of my study was collected during the post-natal period of Lily's pregnancy. She had given birth to a daughter and was at home on maternity leave. This data has been selected to illustrate her understanding and her personal perception of how she adapted to motherhood and the changes it brought about in both her personal and professional life.

4.1 The problem that has no name.

Background.

Since Daisy's birth on the 16th July 2013, Lily enjoyed spending her days at home bonding with her daughter. Following two days paternity leave, Richard, her husband, had returned to complete the summer term in his class teaching role in a primary school some forty miles away. These excerpts are my own field notes.

Excerpt from my personal journal: 6th September 2013

My husband and I spent this evening in with Richard, Lily and Daisy. We decided to share a take-away meal and Lily and I drove to town to collect it. On the way, Lily started to talk about her day. It's the end of her husband's first week back at school [following the summer break] and she spoke quite openly about how he had been quick to suggest that her time at home with Daisy was an 'easier' option than being at school. She bemoaned the fact that now he has returned to work, he considered her time as being unimportant. "It's as though I'm at home doing nothing, just sitting on my backside watching television". She related, how when he got in from school

he would ask her, in what she perceived as being a derisory manner, what she had done that day. She commented on how she felt she had to justify her time at home with Daisy, setting herself tasks and planning agendas. Richard doesn't think that she should be staying in or 'just going to town.' According to him, Daisy should be engaging with other babies at classes like, 'Joe Jingles' and Lily should be interacting with other new mothers, not just spending her time 'with her mum'.. She sounded quite miserable and confided how easy it was for people to assume that "you're nothing, just because you're not going out to work ... and that it was "a sad reflection on motherhood."

Analysis and discussion.

Although the excerpt is quite brief, it is a vivid example of the anxiety and loss of power and control which can be felt by women when they become mothers. A few weeks later Lily succumbed to Richard's wishes and enrolled Daisy into a baby sensory class, which she could ill-afford and which, in the end, only served to further isolate her. It would appear from this data that Lily's perceived lack of autonomy was affecting the choices she was making for both herself and her baby and that she was showing signs of depression and loss of self-esteem.

Infant social interaction.

The responsibility which motherhood brings can be all consuming and immensely challenging. Oakley (1979) and Rich (1986) both comment on the crisis it may trigger in a woman's psyche as she worries and internalises over the pros and cons of caring for her baby. Lily appeared to be experiencing such a crisis, and not secure in her own ideas of what was

the right course of action for Daisy, she bowed to the pressure of her partner's demands and enrolled Daisy into a course of baby sensory classes.

Rentzou (2013) suggests that pre-school play offers a valuable insight into our understanding of "children's personalities, preferences, interests and potential behavioural and social difficulties" (p.645), however I, an Early Years educator, while recognising the importance of play and social interaction in childhood development, would also question at what age this is both suitable and beneficial. Richard's interference may have been well intentioned, at this early stage in Daisy's life, were such classes really advantageous for either her or her mother? Wolf (2003) described the 'awfulness' of visiting her local indoor play area (p.208), while Cusk (2008) described her sortie into the realm of the local mother and baby group as being a something akin to combat. Her manoeuvres to forge a way through the social etiquette of the incumbent clique of mothers was nearly as daunting as her daughter's passive surrender to the older toddlers who raided her chosen toy or pushed their way over her in their charge towards independence. Cusk's anger and protectiveness was transmitted into caustic wit, "I saw that a child with straggling hair and crossed eyes was gripping her [her daughter] by her thick red curls and banging her head repeatedly on the floor" (p.176). The only comfort Cusk (2008) took from the experience was in knowing, that as her daughter ran towards the safety of her embrace, they both knew that she [Cusk] could "protect her, enclose her, look after her" (p.178). My view appears to correlate with that of James (2011), who suggests, that at this young age the need for social interaction is neither necessary nor feasible. He states that it is a myth that children between the ages of one and two years need other children to play with and suggests that rather than interacting with one another, they play in parallel almost all of the time. He believes that "they do not have the emotional or intellectual kit to co-operate" in a group or dyadic situation (p.21). He also suggests that their lack of maturity also impacts on the effectiveness of formal learning strategies, which many parents seem so keen to foster

during the child's formative years (ibid). This theory is supported by Rauscher (2002) whose research findings, daubed the 'Mozart effect,' have been inaccurately used (ibid.) to promote the intellectual development of babies and toddlers. Although it may be a natural aspiration of all parents to want the best for their children, it would appear that during the postpartum and early stages of their life this may simply be achieved within a loving home environment. Gerhardt (2004), while acknowledging that the 'higher' brain capacities, which are first to develop, are social, insists that it is not the social gatherings of the 'baby workshop' where these are developed, it is rather the 'one to one' social experiences with a caring adult; and rather than embarking on any formal learning technique it would be "more appropriate to the baby's stage of development to simply hold and enjoy him" (p.38). Winnicott (1987) would appear to agree. He suggested that it is the interplay between mother and baby "where affection and enjoyment in experience are born" (p.100).

Loss of self-esteem.

The plaintive cry of dejection expressed by my daughter during our car journey would suggest that during this postpartum period she is suffering from a loss of self-esteem. Having spent the past few years basking in the glory of professional plaudits, she now finds herself, and her newly acquired role, being scrutinised and allegedly found lacking, an appraisal which is alien to her. Deplete of her professional status, her husband's perception of how she and Daisy spend their day while he is 'out working' would appear to be an issue of conflict between them. Asher (2011) likens this time spent at home as being on parole, "all our time must be accounted for. Every hour has to have purpose and output: a lost afternoon is work not done or children not nurtured" (p.184). Wolf (2003) describes it as being "acute social demotion that came with motherhood" and states that she "noticed a new flippancy in relation to my time: it was newly valueless" (p.210). This loss of autonomy is recognised by Shelton and

Johnson (2006) as being one of the well documented changes associated with a woman's transition to motherhood. Their study acknowledged the hidden pressure from family and general society of the expectations heaped upon mothers who are at home with their young children. One of their research participants stated "because you're doing motherhood behind closed doors, and you're not out there where people can actually see what you're doing ... people just think you're sitting at home with your feet up ..." (p.324). It would appear that Richard is of the same opinion and whether a misconception or not, Lily's self-esteem appears to have been effected.

Prior to this point in time Lily had appeared secure in her attachment with Daisy and content in her maternal role. Following Richard's return to work however, it would appear that this equilibrium was challenged. She began to feel that she was less than equal to her husband and also harboured a growing hostility to his perception that he was the main worker (Holcomb, 1998). Her autonomy and power appeared to be tested and although Richard's probing may have been well intentioned, according to Holcomb (ibid.) situations like this can be detrimental to the mental health of mothers like Lily. Holcomb states that the very nature of their circumstances means that home based mothers often have little control over their time, and this relinquishing of control and power may frequently lead to loss of self-worth, identity and the "balance of power between herself and her partner" (ibid. p.55). Wolf (2003) describes how the arrival of a baby has the potential to act "as a crack, then a fissure, then an earthquake, that wrenched open the shiny patina of egalitarianism in the marriages of virtually every couple" she knew (p.226). Regrettably, all too often such feelings can impact on the mother's negative perception of herself and Post-Natal Depression (PND) can seep in. As a participant in Barclay; Everitt; Rogan; Schmied and Wyllie's, (1997) research lamented, "you don't have much faith in yourself: it's funny how your self-esteem and just your whole confidence goes plummeting down ..." (p.724). Unprepared to watch my daughter succumb to PND, I decided

to intervene, to accompany and support her on her forays into the ‘outside world’ of mother and babies. Barclay et al. (ibid.) state the importance of such gestures. They suggest that the offer of support and assistance when visiting the play centre or just sitting and talking things through rationally when feelings of sadness, frustration and depression arose, should help her to regain her confidence. And it did. Slowly, over the coming months, she began to regain her essence of self and she began to look more favourably on the renewed autonomy that her return to teaching would bring. And although, she considered her time at home with Daisy precious, the data would appear to suggest that her desire for the satisfaction and recognition of her professional status and self-governing identity was resurfacing and she was no longer content to be submerged in the role of suburban housewife and surrender to the unedifying prospect of yielding to “the problem that has no name” (Friedan, 1963).

4.2 I didn't think you would still be interested...

Background.

Lily has been on maternity leave for five months and throughout this period we have talked at length about the trajectory of her future career. It was brought to her attention that an annual diocesan course for prospective Deputy Head teachers would soon be underway and both I and her former Head teacher had encouraged her to apply. At this stage although reluctant, Lily agreed it would be good to ‘get it under her belt’ because although she relished the time she spent at home with Daisy, she was also conscious that her return to work was fast approaching. Meanwhile, during the autumn term, to assist finances and establish a relationship with her new Head teacher, she carried out a number of informal visits and KIT (Keeping in Touch) days. On each occasion she confided that she was less than impressed with the ‘new’ regime and mutterings amongst the staff would appear to suggest that they too

were struggling to adapt to the change of leadership.

Excerpts from Lily's Journal: 3rd December 2013

Today was a very interesting day and one that gave me lots to think about. I received a phone call yesterday from the new Head of my school. It still concerns me just how nervous he sounds talking to me. My experience of men in power is that of imposing figures who command a room and your attention. He has rung, it turns out, to invite me to the staff Christmas dinner on the 12th of December. As the conversation continues, I explain to him that I have recently been in contact with the Head of the Diocese and we have discussed the possibility of me taking part in the Catholic Deputy Head teacher's course which will take place in January, whilst I am still on my maternity leave. I explain that it was a 'next step' that I had discussed with the previous Head Teacher. He was quite obviously taken aback at this. Stuttering and stumbling, he then proceeded to explain that he had put forward another member of staff for the course, he hadn't thought it would have been of any interest to me "what with you having the baby now." I was a little taken aback at this. In his eyes having a baby or being on maternity leave would automatically discount me from being eager to progress my career or to take advantage of such an excellent opportunity to take the next step. The more I thought about it the more I couldn't believe this statement. The idea that having a baby meant that all my past desires and aspirations for my career would be totally dismissed. Am I not able to be a mother and the best teacher I possibly could be? The more and more I think about it and read about it I am incredibly frustrated. The idea that if you want to be a committed mother, you have to give up your career, go part time etc. Why can't I have both? Why is it that my husband is still being pushed in his career, yet I am being overlooked? We both had a

baby did we not? If anything, the birth of Daisy makes me more determined to succeed. I want her to have a wonderful life and to have opportunities. I also want her to look at me and be proud that I worked hard and was the best that I could be because that is what I will want for her. She is the fuel to my fire and I will not let anyone dampen it.

Analysis and discussion.

The anger and indignation which Lily felt concerning her Head teacher's dismissive assumption is not uncommon. Neitzert (2014) stated that maternity discrimination is prevalent in all areas of women's employment. She suggested that in a survey carried out by The Fawcett Society amongst women who were return to work following the birth of a child, 23% of the women surveyed felt that their opportunities for promotion were worsened on returning from maternity leave and that nearly half of these women believed that the underlying reason for this discrimination was due to senior staff who considered them [the returning mothers] incapable or disinterested in promotion now that they had a child. It would suggest, that despite the introduction of the Equality Act (2010), which cautioned employers against treating women less favourably if they were pregnant or had taken or were wishing to take maternity leave, discrimination is still rife. Silvera (2013), writing in the International Business Times, referred to a government study which suggested that half of all pregnant women living in the United Kingdom suffered some form of disadvantage at work due to the fact that they were pregnant or on maternity leave. He suggested that an estimated nine thousand pregnancy discrimination claims had been brought to trial and that anecdotal evidence regarding maternal discrimination was so prevalent that a research study by the Equality and Human Rights Commission was commissioned. Commenting at the onset of the research proposal, the Chief Executive Mark Hammond stated, "It is very concerning that in 2013 a number of women are still being disadvantaged in the workplace just because they are

pregnant. That would be unlawful discrimination and needs to be tackled” (2013). Unfortunately, those findings, published in July 2015, recognised that although many employers acknowledged the need for women’s statutory rights to be upheld, there still remains an undercurrent of discrimination in which women are either blatantly discriminated against or subliminally subjected to pressure/bias which causes them to resign their jobs (EHRC,2015). It would appear that attempts to ‘tackle’ the discrimination have failed and a woman’s struggle for equality in the workplace continues. Perhaps only the issuing of a ‘red card’ to such employers will ensure the development of a level playing field so that all women enjoy being a respected and valued member of a professional team.

Thus, even though Lily’s initial reluctance to even consider promotion at this stage is frustrating, it is understandable. Resigned to re-entering the workforce, now her self-belief in her professional capability was also dwindling. It is a phenomenon which, according to a study carried out by the Association of Accounting Technicians (2014), is also quite common. Their study suggested that women who decide to take full maternity leave are, by the eleventh month of their leave, often struck by a crisis of confidence which leaves them demoralised, drained of self-belief and feeling that they would no longer be able to function in their former professional capacity. But according to Scott Paul (2014), the female Chief Executive of the AAT, this should not deter them. She argued that it is only natural that a woman’s routines and priorities alter after the birth of a child, but it should not mean however, “that one’s career should be negatively affected or sacrificed” (p.2). By the end of the telephone call to her Head teacher, Lily seems determined that it wouldn’t be. From this point in her journal excerpt, her writing becomes an impassioned rant against the injustice meted out by, what she considers, a patriarchal society.

History would suggest that Lily's assumptions of patriarchal omnipotence may have some credence. Davies (2012) documents how even following their vital contribution to the war effort, in manning the factories and munitions depots, on the return of their husbands and sons from the frontline women were very firmly put back in their place – the kitchen. They were discouraged against entering the labour market because their domestic role was considered more important. Men and women were, Davies suggests, divided into two camps – one in which the men were considered as being the real workers and in the other, women, who were low paid, low skilled and working for pin money (p.143). Even in the early 70's the inequalities of pay, opportunity and cultural norms remained an issue of contention for women. On average they earned less than men for doing the same job and when applying for a mortgage, even if the woman was the higher earner, her income was not taken into account. It would appear that even education proved little advantage. Davies (2012) in her research on modern motherhood relates the experience of one of the women in her study who had graduated from Oxford in the 1980's with a first class degree and a distinction in her MA, who was advised by a careers officer, appearing to have total disregard for her employment potential, to "go home and have babies first" (p.166). As Lily protested in her journal account, why should society assume that the two can't go hand in hand? Friedan (1963) and Rich (1986) appear to agree, they suggested that multitasking has been the remit of women throughout history. The home states Rich (ibid.) was not a refuge from the outside world, it was a centre of work, work which later encompassed the mills and factories where female labour was "cheaper, and they [women], were more easily induced to undergo severe bodily fatigue than men" (p.48). However, because they were cheaper to employ and willing to toil for longer hours, women were considered a threat to male workers and subversive to a patriarchal society, so gradually legislation was passed which controlled and restricted their employment. Similar to Davies' account, it would appear that women had been firmly put

‘back in their place.’ Although the inequalities of the Victorian era have long since passed and a great many advancements have been made towards giving women a more legislative level playing field, it would appear that they still fail to make the same professional advancement as their male peers, and this is especially true of working mothers. Wolf (2003) describes how she was exasperated by the seeming lack of change between her mother’s and her grandmother’s generation, and Asher (2011) lamented that “ while their partners are free to skip along professional stepping stones, mothers are like trapped flies, dolefully buzzing round a jam jar, pent in and pent up” (p.102).

It would appear that if Lily hoped to continue the upward trajectory of her career she must strengthen both her resilience and her determination, otherwise she may not only suffer the stress and fatigue of an increased workload, but also face the discrimination of potential employers who may penalise her for being a mother while promoting her husband because he is a father (Correll, Benard and Paik, 2007). Regrettably, it would appear that although women have made great strides in their fight for equality, once they become mothers those strides are reduced to tentative, laboured steps. Hillary Rodham Clinton (2014), in her key note speech to the 2014 Massachusetts Women’s Conference, described the struggle for equality as being “like pushing a boulder uphill every single day, while Asher (2011), seemingly stung by the injustice of her maternal situation, suggests that “in-equality is woven into the seam of women’s daily experience when they become mothers” (p.12). Perhaps Lily’s experience will be different. We can only hope.

4.3 Abandoning my child and paying for the privilege.

Background.

Lily had spent the months following Daisy’s birth in a cocoon of maternal bliss. Although tired, both from the daily requirements of looking after a new baby and her medical condition,

she appeared to be totally besotted by her daughter's arrival. The only cloud on the horizon was the fact that now, two thirds of the way through her period of paid maternity leave, she was becoming increasingly conscious of the need to organise suitable childcare for Daisy in anticipation of her return to work after the Easter holidays. It would seem evident from these journal excerpts that she was finding the whole experience demoralising. Already anxious about having to leave the care of her baby daughter to others, her dissatisfaction and disapproval of the nursery options available to her was tangible. Though not produced in its entirety, it is difficult to edit the content of Lily's journal entry as its passionate and often acerbic content clearly illustrates the turmoil and angst which she felt regarding the momentous decision she is having to make.

Excerpt from Lily's journal: 27th February 2014

So the past few days have been a haze and I feel emotionally drained. You see today I signed up to abandon my child. As of April 29th 2014, I'm abandoning her for near enough ten hours a day into someone else's care because I literally cannot afford to do anything else. My heart is a little bit broken. I feel like I am cheating her. I promised to be her mum, to always be there for her and to protect her from the world.

I had been avoiding looking round nurseries for months. My initial foray into the world of nurseries had not been very successful. At six months pregnant, I left the prospective nursery in tears, declaring that I would find some way of feeding myself and the child on fresh air ... So now, after speaking to several people who were keen to urge me to go and look at nurseries and to make sure I had a place, I made a few phone calls. I scoured the internet and read Estyn reports like my life depended on it. The first place we went to look at, can only be described as what I imagine the festering depths of hell to look like. This

particular location was bare, dull and lifeless and sadly all the children inside stared out as though they had recently undergone lobotomies or at best were heavily sedated a la Michael Jackson. To be honest it was the over powering smell of faeces that emanated from the kitchen that sealed the deal for me. Reluctantly, I contacted two other places.

The second of these reminded me of what can only be described as a small baby sweatshop. Endless rows of children sat at tables eating floppy crisp bread with cream cheese and cucumber, whilst someone droned endless nursery rhymes and attempted to spoon feed along the production line... there was no soul to the place. I knew instantly that Daisy would have been one of many in this place. She wouldn't be loved as an individual. I wouldn't have been surprised if they had given her a number and a sticker so that she could be identified.

The middle nursery was the best of the bunch and instantly when I walked through the door I felt a sense of warmth come over me and I felt very welcome. The manager who met us was more interested in talking to Daisy and interacting with her than with me. My anxiety kicked in as she described the CCTV system which allowed parents to look at incidents which had occurred. I suddenly imagined my little girl sat in a corner feeling sad or being pushed by some other little shit of a child. I hugged her closer to me and planned to invest in some sort of padding for her to wear day and night. Do Babygro's come in bubble wrap? ... However, happy little children who ran up to us and wanted to chat and ask me questions allowed my confidence to grow. As we were shown the beautiful gardens and the new outdoor classroom in progress, I knew that if I had to leave her, this place would nurture her and perhaps love her a little bit. So that was that. I signed on the dotted line and

left my deposit. I felt wretched. I watch her sleeping as I write and I wonder whether this decision will have as huge an impact as I imagine. Whether this could be the difference between her being a contented little girl or a disturbed adolescent who suffers from a sense of abandonment.

Analysis and discussion.

The key elements which are pertinent to the excerpts from Lily's journal are, I believe, both personal and political. On a personal note, she would appear to be suffering issues of attachment and abandonment, issues which, I would suggest, have been enhanced and determined by the underlying concerns associated with pay and childcare provision. Fiscal obligations which, at this stage, she believed had necessitated her decision to return to work and her need to find 'the right' childcare would appear to be the root cause of her despair and concern regarding Daisy's future wellbeing.

Attachment anxieties.

Lily's worries have some credence. Gerhardt (2004), recognising the importance of maternal attachment, believes that the key feature which distinguishes the human baby from all other animals is its receptiveness to human interaction (p.33). She suggests that a major part of the brain's capacity i.e. the orbitofrontal cortex, is initially dependent on the relationship that the baby has with its mother and states that if this relationship is deficient in any way, it has the possibility to delay or even jeopardise the baby's healthy development. If, however, the relationship is good there is little to worry about, "when the relationship is dominated by pleasurable interactions, the parent and the baby are, without realising it, building up the baby's prefrontal cortex and developing his capacities for self-regulation and complex social interactions" (ibid. p.39). The importance of a symbiotic rapport is also important for the baby's emotional intelligence, and Gerhardt (2004) supported by Schore (2003), suggests that

the visual stimulus a baby receives from its mother i.e. smiles and positive looks, activate a biochemical response within the baby which encourages beta-endorphins to be released and, as a natural consequence, helps to stimulate the growth of neurons. According to Gerhardt (2004), the most substantial period of growth for these synaptic connections is between the ages of six and twelve months, “just when the developing pleasurable relationship between parents and baby is most intense, and attachment bonds are being consolidated” (p.43). Fortunately during this stage of Daisy’s development Lily has been on maternity leave and would appear to have established an openly responsive and ebullient rapport with her daughter.

Whilst Gerhardt’s research was primarily focused on the effects of attachment on the neurological development of the baby, an earlier theorist, Bowlby (1973), focused his attention on the psychological and behavioral impact of a child’s attachment to his mother. He believed this, to be as great as his [the child’s] hunger for food. Commenting in the first half of the twentieth century, Bowlby’s pioneering research influenced the care and practice of child centered policy making for many years. Together with his research colleague Ainsworth, he suggested that from the moment a child is born, bonds of attachment are cultivated and a secure base is established. Failure to provide this secure base has the potential to deprive children of the prospect of developing a sense of safety, the necessary springboard to enable curiosity and exploration to grow and ultimately future successful independence (Holmes, 1993). Worryingly, for all working mothers like Lily, Bowlby (1973) suggested that privation of maternal care during the first five years of a child’s life results in an insecure base and the potential for a whole myriad of social and emotional problems to develop including physical, intellectual, behavioural and emotional damage. I would suggest however that Bowlby was a man of his time, a time when women were expected to remain at home to care

for their children and put their career ambitions on the back-burner. Today many women choose to continue working when they become mothers and indeed many women have no choice but work because of financial necessity. This fact is recognised by Richard Bowlby, John Bowlby's son, who while not disparaging his father's work has sought to situate its findings in today's contemporary setting. Acknowledging the shift in the rise of working mothers he suggests that it is not so much the role of the mother's attachment to the child, although this should always be considered important, but the importance of a primary attachment figure, be it father, grandmother, nanny or nursery care workers, that is essential. While he supports his father's theory that for the first nine months of a child's life this is best served through a child's loving relationship with his primary carer, usually its mother, he believes that this may also be achieved through secondary attachments. Thus, through the careful selection and management a child's day care environment the child has the potential to develop attachment relationships with more than one key carer.

In a society which encourages both parents to work outside the home while their children are under three, it is attachment focused child care arrangements that have a crucial role to play in facilitating the healthy emotional development of children. (Richard Bowlby, n.d. p.3.)

Political and socio-economic anxieties.

As previously suggested, a prominent feature of Lily's journal is her impending return to the 'chalk-face' and the consequences that ensue. The requirement to work was, at this stage of Lily's maternity leave, influenced primarily by the financial obligations of homeownership and lifestyle choices, which she and her husband were committed to. As a teacher she was entitled to fifty two weeks maternity leave (NUT, 2011) however, only half of this period was paid leave, and after the first four weeks that too was subject to an ever diminishing scale. By

the nineteenth week, only Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP) of £128.73 was paid, and this ceased completely for the final thirteen weeks if the full entitlement of 52 weeks was taken. With a mortgage to pay and a new baby to provide for it would appear that Lily had limited options available to her, and on three occasions she, somewhat flippantly, refers to how the lack of money is impacting her decision making. Similar to many couples, she and her husband are dependent on the income of two primary earners to support their financial commitments (Lewis, 2008), so, like many young mothers, she has little choice but to return to work. Bingham (2013) supported by Guendouzi (2006) states that the number of employed women with dependent children had risen to 5.3 million, an overall increase of 800,000 women since 1996, and this is largely due to economic necessity. It would appear that given that women are such an integral part of the workforce, the policy on maternity leave requires further consideration, for as Clegg (2012) announced, the “current system of maternity leave is antiquated and out-of-step with the wishes of modern parents who want much greater flexibility in how they look after their children ...reform is long overdue.”

Whatever the reasons for doing so, the decision to place one's child into day care is a difficult one. Even if we chose to disregard the hostility of others, quick to criticise our maternal choices, as a genre, we are quite accomplished at self-flagellation (Holcomb, 1998), and even women like myself, who willingly returned to work following a pregnancy, are still subject to feelings of guilt. According to Holcomb (ibid.) it is an inherent part of our female nature – it comes with the territory. This sense of maternal guilt is also recognised in the participants of Guendouzi's 2006 research study. Like Lily, they were teachers who were also working mothers. Her findings suggested that although they had gone to great lengths to make satisfactory provisions for their children's care they still felt that, by working, they were “breaking the social requirement of accessibility of the ever-present mother” (p.903). Even America's former First Lady, and presidential candidate, Hillary Rodham Clinton

acknowledges the difficulty. Addressing the women attending The Massachusetts Conference for Women in 2014, she spoke of the guilt that working mothers like her suffered, describing it as a “guilt that is with them every single day” and she eloquently recalled how in her early days as a lawyer, it was only on her return from work and seeing that her daughter was safe and well, that “my heart stopped hurting”.

Perhaps Lily’s experience may be different. Her concerted efforts to find the ‘right’ nursery for Daisy may be fruitful. Certainly, her sense of optimism when visiting her chosen nursery appeared to suggest this. She believed, that what she was looking for, a place where her daughter would thrive and possibly be shown love in her mother’s absence, had been found, and for Lily and other women in a similar situation the thought that their child will be offered this form of ‘professional love’ is pivotal (Page, 2011). It is, states Page (ibid.), a “crucial phenomenon within the decision making process about whether to leave her child and resume paid employment” (p.320). Only time will tell, unfortunately, research evidence and personal history would suggest that no matter how much care and deliberation Lily invested in finding the ‘perfect’ nursery, she will always be plagued by feelings of guilt (Clinton, 2014, Guendouzi, 2006, James 2011, and Page, 2011).

4.4 Guilt, sadness, worry and panic!

Background.

For the past fifty two weeks Lily had been on maternity leave. Having originally planned to return to work at the beginning of the summer term, given her health issues and her reluctance to leave Daisy, my husband and I offered to assist her financially so that she could enjoy the full maternity option available to her. During her maternity leave a number of changes had occurred. The new acting Head teacher has been appointed to her school and

Lily had successfully applied for promotion at another school in the diocese and been appointed Deputy Head teacher for the autumn term commencing September 2014.

In line with her contractual commitment to her current school she returned to work to complete the final week of the academic year. This served two purposes. Firstly, she would immediately resume her full salary entitlement for both her week of employment and the following five weeks holiday of the summer break, and secondly, it would give her the opportunity to say goodbye to the children, parents and colleagues at her current school. I provided the full time care for Daisy during this week of employment.

Excerpt: An edited version of the interview which took place on the 13th July 2014 (the day before Lily returned to work).

EM: So Lily, let me first begin by asking you how you feel knowing that you are going back to work on Monday?

Lily: Hmm...honestly I'm dreading it ... hmm... I'm very nervous,... two, two factors [pause, and she fidgets as if uncomfortable, trying to find the right words to describe her real emotions]] the first is leaving Daisy, obviously ... hmm I've been with her every single day of her life you know I spend very little time away from her and the thought of leaving her to go off and look after somebody else's child ...hmm it just frustrates me, but I know she's with my mum so she's safe ... you know, I, there is ... something about it that makes it easier. The other part is going back to work, you know, not having taught for the whole year ... will I still be able to do it, will I still be as good as I used to be?

EM: Were there any negative aspects to extending your maternity leave?

Lily: *Hmm... [Pauses to think] Yes, yes. Hmm it's been hard financially, our budget was very tight and the money goes on your child and your house and so I found it very hard adjusting to having nothing for myself ...hmm [pause] and living on a budget has taken a lot of getting used to, also hmm, at times it has frustrated me playing the housewife role, it's something I thought I would always enjoy, however sometimes the mundane reality of cleaning and cooking as being your only...hmm ... only part of your daily routine that can give you any satisfaction is a lot harder to live out than I had imagined. ... hmm and I think I just missed my job ... I miss the satisfaction, I miss the plaudits ... I miss somebody telling me I'm doing a good job ... hmm because there's no, there's no award, nobody's says anything if you're doing a good job as a mum or doing a good job as a wife, or you know as a home owner, nobody ever tells you anything, whereas in your job there is some sort of ,satisfaction and I've missed that and increasingly I miss that ... hmm I also feel that I need my brain to work.*

EM: You may have already answered this but if it was a possibility would you extend your maternity leave even more?

Lily: *There is a small part of me that would say yes I have enjoyed ... I have relished being a mum and doing things with I ... hmm ... despite at times it being a little bit ... [searches for the appropriate word] boring and frustrating ... but I have relished it and I would love to be there to watch her grow and to be there for all her experiences ... however there is no way it would ever [stressed] be financially viable. It has never been something ... there's no support there to help people in the, the money bracket we're in ... salary bracket, you know it just would never have been possible. It's time to*

go back to work and there's something I'm excited about by that because I love the challenge of work. I really get enjoyment from work but I have a terrible sense of guilt that I feel that way.

EM: What are the positive aspects of returning to work?

Lily: *Hmm ... being in work in some respects, and a lot of people told me this, or have spoken to me about this, there's a wonderful sense of freedom, hmm... you can almost focus... it's almost like pre having a child for a few hours. I feel guilty for being excited about the prospect of going back to work ... I feel guilty ... that I couldn't do more to be with her for longer [her eyes are filled with tears at this point, but she blinks them away and the interview continued with Lily talking about her ambivalent feelings about the care arrangement] ... but I feel an even greater sense of guilt that I'm really looking forward to going back to work and at the moment that's the constancy I live in guilt and sadness and worry and ...panic ... that I'm going to end...not end up doing the right thing for her ... and for her future.*

EM: So, finally, if you had the choice and money was no object, would you stay at home or go back to work?

Lily: *[Seven seconds of silence follows before she answers]*
I'm honestly not sure on that one... I've felt a little bit brain dead ... at the end of this twelve months I felt like I'm losing the power to think and do and know and ... sometimes I wonder if I'm just becoming ... just ... another ... nothingness ... you know, someone's who's only good for hoovering and polishing and I know I'm more than that [said with emphasis] ... and also ... it, it has become a bit boring and repetitive. I suppose the only reason I don't want to say no that I wouldn't [stay at home] is cos it makes me sound like a bad person ... it makes me a bad mother that I wouldn't want to necessarily

stay with my child all the time ... I would [emphasised] ... but maybe not every day.

EM: [Prompt] What do you mean that you don't know whether you could work like that?

Lily: *Hmm I'm an all or nothing kind of person, I would either ... I either do my job all the time or I don't do it, I would find it too frustrating and I'd probably end up working at home anyway hmmm ... so like I say ... in an ideal world I imagine having a few days at home with Daisy, to give her my love and care would be wonderful ... but I'm not sure I would actually enjoy the reality of it ... that's not to say I'm not going to miss her hmm ... [silence]*

EM: [prompt] So is your return to work selflessly motivated to provide for Daisy?

Lily: *In some respects ... in a lot of respects ... well ... in a lot of respects my return to work ... is and was inevitable, there's no way we would survive without me ... so basically you know, it just has to be done , I don't have a choice about it but I suppose getting this promotion and ... making the best of it and doing a good job and moving up the career ladder ...it's not completely selfless, I am doing it for Daisy and my family, to give us the best quality of life but ... no there is some selfish ... selfishness there because ... I like people telling me I'm good and I want to be the best at what I do ... I want to set that example for Daisy, I want to be a strong, successful independent woman hmm ... that you can achieve whatever you want if you set your mind to it and ...hmm ...yeh and it makes me feel good ... being good and doing a good job but ... ultimately [emphasised] everything I do is for her and always will be ... hopefully.*

Analysis and discussion.

On examination of this heavily edited interview, it would appear that Lily is dealing with confusing and difficult feelings. Analysis of the descriptive and linguistic aspects, as recommended by Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009), would suggest that the frequent pauses and her repetitive use of 'hmm' are indicative of her inner struggle to articulate her complex and emotive feelings, while her repeated lapses into silence, are a symptom of the depth of her inner turmoil. For, amidst the protestations of fiscal necessity, it would appear that she is battling the guilt of self-gratification. Vocalising her desire to work and to leave Daisy in the care of 'others' would appear to be impacting on her maternal identity of being a good enough mother (Winnicott, 1953) and generating an overwhelming degree of inner conflict. Such conflict is recognised by Badinter (2011), who suggests that today, more and more western women are faced with the conflict of whether to prioritise their maternal or professional identities. She argues that fundamentally

these women want it all ... they want the means for their independence, a chance to establish themselves professionally...and ... at the same time they also want to experience motherhood, with all the love and joy that come with a child. (Badinter, 2011 p.128).

According to Wilson (2006), this is not just a new phenomenon. She acknowledges that as far back as the fifties, women began to challenge the accepted notions offered by theorists like Winnicott (1953) and Bowlby (1973), of the good mother being one who was confined by the boundaries of their home. These women, women like my own mother, chose to adopt the view, that by working outside of the home they were in fact being extremely 'good mothers', showing their children, through their own example, that self-reliance and independence were achievable and aspirational goals to have, and that through their external

endeavours, a higher standard of living could be achieved for all of the family. Wilson (2006) however, states that unfortunately, people at that time dismissed these reasons as being ‘excellent excuses’ and an attempt to vindicate their feelings of guilt. If this was true, then the according to Holcombe (1998) it was guilt which was “aided and abetted by the society around them” (p.324).

While economic considerations have and probably always will play an important role in the decisions made by mothers concerning their future employment (Page, 2013), they are not the only factors. Irrespective of fiscal necessity, Poduval and Poduval (2009) suggest that it is also the need for mental stimulation and self-efficacy which encourages many working mothers to return to paid employment. They suggest that whether a manual or professional worker, many women feel the need for the stimulation of adult company other than that which can be accessed at the mother and baby groups. Freidan (1963) agreed, she stated, that women want something more than just a husband and children and home, they want a career. And the origins of this domestic emancipation reach far back into the annals of history. Following the end of the Second World War there was a decline in the female workforce and women, often reluctantly, returned to ‘the kitchen’ (Davies, 2012); recognising this a waste of valuable talent and arguing against the accepted policy of the day, the seemingly enlightened, but then little known, politician Margaret Thatcher (1952) suggested that, rather than be confined by their marital status, women should be encouraged back into the workforce and if they were not, it was a betrayal of all of those who had fought for equal rights in the face of misguided opposition. Acknowledging the growing derision which was being heaped on working mothers of her generation, she stated that “the idea that the family suffers is, I believe, quite mistaken. To carry on with a career stimulates the mind, and provides a refreshing contact with the world outside” (p.2). Rich (1986) offers a personal account of her own turmoil. Writing hauntingly of her deep love for her child, but

also petitioning for her need to regain some sense of self, some time to salvage her identity; she wrote of her inner conflict. It felt, she states, as though there was “an inequality between us: my needs always balanced against those of a child, and always losing” (ibid. p.23).

Whether this conflict will remain with Lily is a matter for future determination. For now, she had reached a decision, she was returning to work and reclaiming her professional identity. Similar to the working mothers in Guendouzi’s (2006) study, she may face many challenges and continue to experience an inner sense of conflict, but as Guendouzi (ibid.) argues, it may also be a sanctuary providing “a separate sphere in which [she] can access and express [her] individual identity” (p.907), and the reclamation of her professional identity appears to be the crux of Lily’s craving. Yes, she loves being a mother, but she appeared to question whether “this is all?” (Friedan, 1963, p. 5). It may be difficult to determine whether her decision is right or wrong, but she has made her choice and only time will tell whether it has been the right one. The conflict and guilt she is now experiencing is a consequence of her decision and may never dissipate, in fact, Holcomb (1998) suggests that it should be expected - that guilt and conflict co-exist with being a working mother. Purves (2015) suggests that whatever her decision, in the eyes of many in our society “a mother’s place is in the wrong.” I would suggest however, that what may appear wrong in the eyes of society may be right for Lily, and this guilt is just part of the price she will have to pay, because, in my experience, the conflict she is presently suffering from, will become part of her psyche for at least the duration of Daisy’s early education if not the course of her life. Whenever there is a concert she is unable to attend, or an infection which she is impotent to nurse, the guilt and the conflict she is currently experiencing will resurface like a missile set on a trajectory to target her conscience.

4.5 My reflexive appraisal of the second trimester.

The changes which I have observed in my daughter's life and demeanour during the second trimester of my study have been both a source of joy and frustration for her and for me. I reflect on the car journey we shared, as documented in my personal journal, because it was significant in that it was, perhaps, the first occasion in weeks that Lily and I had been alone. Her womb was empty and Daisy was tucked up in her Moses basket, oblivious of her mother's absence, and it was with some dismay that I listened to my daughter's distress and disillusionment. I'm not sure whether it was the increasingly enlightened feminist side of my nature coming to the fore or just my innate sense of maternal defensiveness, but hearing my daughter speak in this way, I immediately felt like a lioness defending her cub. How dare he [Richard] comment on how she should spend her day! Invasive hot thoughts ran through my brain: Although I enjoy a good relationship with my son-in-law, on this occasion, my sense of injustice bubbled. Despite my protestations however, some weeks later, Lily heeded Richard's opinion and enrolled into a series of locally run 'baby sensory' classes, regardless of the cost of them impacting significantly on her carefully calculated budget. Each week she travelled to a local community centre where an enthusiastic lady produced a series of coloured scarves, crinkly, shiny papers and rice filled bottles which were wafted, rubbed and shaken with the intention of stimulating the babies into cognitive appreciation. Daisy spent the majority of these sessions either sleeping or crying, while Lily sat bored and desolate, wishing she was in the comfort of her own home or with me enjoying a cup of tea and a chat.

Some months later, when Daisy had begun to crawl, a further foray into post-natal creativity included a visit to a baby and toddler play centre. Reluctantly, but by now acknowledging that Lily needed my support, I accompanied them to a soulless, windowless, warehouse situated in the middle of an industrial estate. We arrived full of expectation. Now that Daisy was a

little older and more alert, Lily was especially keen to provide her with imaginative and stimulating experiences. Some thirty minutes later, she left feeling defensive, dejected and somewhat intimidated by the aggressive behaviour of both the parents and toddlers as they jockeyed for position on the inflatable slides and unhygienic ball pits. It was an experience we both plan never to repeat.

As the weeks of her maternity leave progressed, Lily and I had even more time to spend together than usual and in between feeds and general baby care, both being teachers we talked about school. We discussed government policy, teaching methods, educational outcomes. I waxed lyrical about the teaching standards of yesteryear and she gently reminded me of how things have changed. Together, with my sister, we have been accused, by family members, of talking ‘non-stop school’. One of the topics we regularly discussed in, I acknowledge, an entirely subjective, disparaging way, was how historically, male teachers, irrespective of talent, had an advantage over women when an opportunities for promotion arose. Therefore on reading the initial paragraph to her journal entry entitled, “I didn’t think you would still be interested”, I was taken aback at Lily’s description of her view of male teachers, their power and how they command the room. A surge of feminist antagonism coursed through my veins. Was this written for literary effect or did she truly place men in this hierarchical position? A discussion for the future [after my thesis is submitted] I think. This aside, one of the primary features of our discussions in the weeks preceding her Head teacher’s telephone call, had been regarding the diocesan course for Deputy Head teachers commencing in January. As this course was only run once a year it was obvious to me that Lily should apply. At first she protested – she wasn’t ready; Daisy was still so young; she wasn’t good enough! I quickly tried to dispel such notions. Even putting aside my maternal pride, as an educational professional, I recognised her clear ability and huge potential. In my opinion she had to apply, why wait another year? Pushy mother I may well be, but reflecting on my own career and,

with the advantage of hindsight, how I wish that I had had someone to push me and prop up my confidence when it was flagging. At the time, even though my husband was definitely encouraging and supportive, he was busy carving out his own successful career and when choices had to be made, it was left to me to take a step back. Having two school age children and no family living within two hundred miles, I felt I had little choice, so the Headship I was invited to apply for at the age of thirty four seemed an insurmountable feat. I remained in the classroom. On reflection it's a decision I regret. Like Lily, my potential was apparent, I was amongst the first cohort of graduate teachers, I had gained distinction for teaching practice and my ability was recognised by the Head teachers and colleagues I worked with, but unlike Lily, my support structure was almost non-existent. I had no family living close by to lend a hand when the demands of leadership involved staying behind for late night meetings and conferences, or when childhood illnesses prevented my child from attending nursery. I prided myself on my good reputation and I was unwilling to take on a position of leadership which I was unable to commit to one hundred percent. I have no doubt that my personal frustration plays a significant role in my determination to encourage and support Lily in her career options, because as much as I empathise with Lily's current enjoyment of her maternal role, I know only too well how the quickly the years fly by and the potential that may have once been apparent can become submerged beneath the responsibilities of motherhood. Fortunately after much cajoling on my part, and lengthy deliberation on Lily's, she decided to apply. Despite independently financing the course and attending it during her maternity leave, protocol demanded that she should inform her Head teacher, so nervously she made the telephone call while I sat with Daisy. On finishing her conversation her astonishment and derision was audible. Clearly agitated, she paced the floor and related to me what had been said. While vociferous in my disapproval, I was also quietly smug -the Head Teacher in his ignorance had 'done the job' for me. I no longer needed to coax and persuade her. On the

basis of his words, she had 'come out fighting'. Now she was ready to regain her professional reputation and prove to the world that it is possible not only to be a good teacher but also a good mother.

All that had to be addressed now was finding a suitable nursery for Daisy and Lily's criteria was possibly unattainable. The weeks we spent traipsing around the various nurseries in the area were a professionally enlightening experience. The differences in standards of hygiene, creative play and overall quality of care reflected in Lily's journal, were also apparent to me. Watching from the sidelines it was clear to me that having to abdicate her maternal duties to someone else was proving a struggle. The experience brought memories of my own anxieties flooding back. I had faced these same dilemmas and unlike Lily I had been keen to return to work. Now Lily, whose reservations were still tangible, was facing the prospect of handing over Daisy's care to another. Motherhood for her was an uncompromising aspect of her being and now that the baby she had yearned for had arrived, she carried her around as though joined by an invisible umbilical cord, reluctant to let her out of her sight for even one minute. Enveloped in her mother's arms, Daisy quickly learned to smile at her mother and respond to her voice, her smell and her touch. For Lily, every minute was precious and although fatigued, she rarely displayed signs of irritation regarding the level of neediness that this new little being required, as she confided in me, she chose to spend all of her time with her baby daughter because she genuinely derived the greatest pleasure from her company.

As the weeks passed, Lily seemed less sure of her decision to return to work, and increasingly complained that it was only financial constraints which were coercing her to relinquish her maternal ties and push her back into the workplace. Maternal guilt was beginning to overwhelm her. Each morning our chats consisted of her accounts of the anguish and torment that she suffered at the very thought of having to 'abandon' her child. While I empathised

with her distress, I was conscious of my own feelings, that no matter how much Lily enjoyed motherhood, sometime in the future, my bright, bubbly, intelligent and capable daughter may become stifled and jaded by the banality of aspects of the day to day humdrum that fulltime mothering had to offer. So I set about cajoling her, suggesting that I and millions of others had returned to work and that she and her brother had not suffered any ill effects, but she was dismissive – Daisy was different. Was this Lily now suggesting my love and care had been lacking? Defensively I tried to reason with her that Daisy was no different – I certainly hadn't loved my children any less than she loved Daisy, but she was unresponsive to my appeals. She didn't want to hear any rational argument in support of returning to work, and irrationally in my opinion, she believed that her daughter would think that her mummy didn't love her and would spend her days crying, thinking that she had been rejected. In Lily's eyes she was abandoning her daughter to an abysmal fate, and although she had little choice in making her decision, she was determined to punish herself for what she considered the reluctant but seemingly willful abdication of her motherly duties.

The final section of data in this trimester was the interview, in which I was able to ask specific questions, which I felt were pertinent to my research. As previously cited, due to the nature of the research project and our close relationship and proximity, Lily had had the opportunity to air her concerns and discuss her feelings on numerous occasions throughout her maternity leave, so in the main, none of her disclosures are a surprise to me. What did come as a surprise is the degree to which my own feelings and memories were stirred. It has caused me to reflect upon the historical challenges which I faced as a working mother/teacher nearly thirty years ago. How political, economic and societal policies impacted on my life and career and how they compare with my daughter's experience. In comparison to Lily, I would suggest that my own experience of new motherhood was far

more challenging and tense. Due to my husband's promotion, we had relocated to Gloucestershire and following two terms of supply work I had just secured a full-time contract at a large Catholic Infant school on the outskirts of Gloucester city centre. Six weeks into the role I discovered I was pregnant. Overwhelmed by feelings of fear and panic I informed my Head teacher and Chair of Governors, convinced of their feelings of disappointment and resentment concerning my appointment. But I had totally misjudged them. Whether it was due to the fact that it was a catholic school and therefore they assumed that my pregnancy was proof of my catholicity or just that they were genuinely kind people who were keen to placate my observable feelings of trepidation, they congratulated me and assured me of their support for my future employment. It was because of this act of compassion together with financial necessity that I determined that, unlike Lily, my own absence from school would be as brief as possible. Where conceivable, ante-natal appointments were made after the end of the school day and hospital visits during holidays, I was determined to repay their faith in me.

My period of confinement commenced at the end of the half term holiday of the summer term, two weeks later and overdue, Lily was born. Four weeks later I returned to school to complete the final week of the summer term – a signal, both of commitment to the school and my desperation for fiscal remuneration to satisfy my mortgage provider. What I now realise, is that it was not the hardship of the practical characteristics of this period of my life which remain with me, but the loneliness of that decision making process. Unlike Lily, mine was an isolating experience. Yes, of course I had my husband who was totally supportive of my choices, but I lacked the feminine companionship of a female confidant who could empathise and chat about the choices and worries which pulled at me. New to the neighbourhood I had few friends; I was the youngest and newest member of a staff, some of whom were openly critical of my decision to be a working mother; and I was separated

from my own mother by a distance of nearly two hundred miles. We (my husband and I) were alone, facing an exciting, but frightening future without the security blanket of either family or friends. How different to Lily, who had the love and support of an extended family to sustain and nurture her and with whom, during the bleakest of moments she was able to vent her concerns, allay her fears and undertake a considerably less solitary transitional journey into motherhood than the route I had travelled.

Following the interview, Lily and I chatted informally. I believe that in a similar way to how her pregnancy has altered the dynamic of our relationship, so too did the sharing of our mutual accounts of our postpartum experiences. Although some twenty eight years had passed, just by relating my experience, Lily became the friend I wish I had had during those loneliest of times, the confident with whom I was able to share my now, bygone fears; the family who was - just there! We will always remain mother and daughter, but it would appear that as Lily's life journey begins to travel along a similar trajectory to my own, it was as though a metaphorical bridge has been crossed.

Chapter Five: The Third Trimester

Introduction.

The data gathered and selected for inclusion in the third trimester of my study was collected during the final phase of my research. Lily had completed her maternity leave and had resumed her teaching career, and assumed the mantle of working mother. This data was selected to illustrate her and my perceptions of how she has adjusted to this combined role and to try to capture the reality of her lived experience.

5.1 Sometimes life is so unfair!

Background:

Following fifty eight weeks (fifty two weeks maternity leave and six weeks summer holiday leave) of caring for her daughter, Daisy, on a full time basis, Lily had returned to work. During her leave of absence she had been successful in securing a promotion to Deputy Head teacher at a large Catholic school within the diocese. The school had been in 'Special Measures'¹ and Lily had been appointed to assist the Head teacher in driving forward the necessary curriculum changes. Although she was excited, she was also aware that it may be something of a poisoned chalice. Added to this she was struggling with the reality of abdicating Daisy's care to the staff of a local nursery. Her journal entry is an account of her first two days back at an unfamiliar 'chalk face,' amongst a cohort of people, few of whom appear to welcome the fresh input of a talented young 'high flyer', and others whose weariness and cynicism

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Schools are made subject to special measures under section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, where the Chief Inspector is of the opinion that:

'...the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education, and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.' (Education Act, 2005).

towards any form of change appeared to have increased exponentially with their length of service.

Excerpts from Lily's Journal on the 1st and 2nd of September 2014.

1st September.

In a way I think I like being on the periphery of it all and not having the faff of having to pretend I'm best friends with everyone.

It's just so much change! My brain can't comprehend it! I feel like I'm drowning a little bit ATM [at the moment]. I am trying to get things in perspective by writing lists but there is just so much to do! I think the scale of the challenge is finally sinking in!

If I'm honest, I'm left feeling a little low.... I could have cried all day. I am so worried she [Daisy] will think I've abandoned her and forget me. Also I don't want her to feel lonely. I had visions of her sat wondering where I was and why I wasn't there for her. I know it wasn't like that but it haunted me all day!

2nd September [The following day].

I have spent the whole of today feeling like I am slowly sinking into depression. I find my whole day being interspersed with the desire to either ring to check on her every five minutes or to run screaming out the door to the nursery to bring her home.

I sound light hearted but I have a real pain in my heart and my eyes are welling up thinking of her being on her own with strangers thinking that I

have abandoned her. In the quiet times like lunchtime, I really could sit and sob. It isn't made any easier by the sheer amount of information and questions and expectations people have of me and it's only day two.

I am constantly plagued with doubts and wondering if I've made the right choice. I have to keep telling myself that even if I hadn't taken this career leap I still couldn't have afforded to stay at home with Daisy. So I guess better to do a well-paid hard job, than a boring crap paid one!

When I pick Daisy up she doesn't smile at me or cuddle into me for a good half hour just clings onto me tightly. I keep thinking this is pay back or maybe the bond has already been broken. I spend the two hours (God I hate that I only get three hours of her day) manically playing, feeding and trying to do whatever I can to make her smile, be happy and remember how much she loves me!

As she goes down to sleep, my eyes fill up again, plagued with guilt I whisper over and over how much I love her, praying and hoping she will know that I love her and that I don't want to be away from her.

Analysis and discussion.

Although the data allows for the opportunity to analyse and discuss at length the complexity of Lily's sadness and guilt on resuming her career, it is the source, nature and correctness of it which I am keen to examine. In doing so, I intend to draw on the work of Creamer and Laughlin (2005); Li and Kerperlman (2007) and Ginevra; Nota and Ferrari (2015), whose research suggests that maternal influences may be a determining factor in a daughter's career choice and progression. The second part of this analysis will continue by reviewing the reality

of her experience and the pull of practical and emotional issues which may affect her job satisfaction and impact negatively on her continued employment.

I would suggest that the relationship I have with my daughter, Lily, has played a significant role, both in the choice and the trajectory of her career. Similar to the participants of Creamer and Laughlin's 2005 study, Lily has always been keen to solicit my opinion and guidance concerning her future career prospects. Then, as now, my advice was given with the very best of intentions and Lily accepted and acted upon it in the belief that my judgement was accurate and my care for her welfare paramount (Creamer and Laughlin, 2005). Since embarking on her teaching career she has continued to canvas my opinion and seek my advice, even if she has not always acted upon it. Our day to day interaction has in all likelihood, suggest Li and Kerpelman (2007), been a significant contributor to the shaping of her professional identity. This concept is supported by the research of Ginevra et al. (2015) who suggest that the collaborative discussions which Lily and I share, in all probability, help her to feel supported and have enabled her to identify her career goals, make informed choices and develop "career self-efficacy"(p.13).

During her three years teaching experience, as she grew in confidence and competency and her aptitude garnered the attention of County officials and Estyn inspectors, the subject of her career enhancement became a regular topic of our conversations. I was keen to encourage her to think of a career beyond the classroom, a career in which she could implement her ideas, motivate her colleagues and inspire her pupils. I was adamant that she should be working towards this goal now, not postponing it until 'the time was right,' the right time may never happen. According to Ginevra et al. (2015) supported by Young et al. (2006) this might well have been the catalyst which helped Lily in her decision to apply for promotion. Because she had the opportunity to freely discuss her aspirations with me, a largely uncritical and entirely

supportive confidant, she was probably bolstered in her aim to achieve them. Now, reading of her isolation and confusion I must question whether my maternal zeal should have been tempered, for while I remain convinced that she has both the ability and the determination to be an exceptional leader, I must question whether she has the desire.

Examination of her journal entry would suggest that it is perhaps the tug of her maternal guilt which is the primary reason Lily is beginning to question her professional decision. As Hillary Rodham Clinton (2014) stated, one of the most difficult things a mother can do is to leave the care of her child to others, and at this early stage of her return to work, Lily appeared to be calling into doubt all of the carefully measured decisions she had made. Ultimately she has no choice but to work, but now she appeared to be self-castigating and manufacturing self-imposed aspersions on the value of both her maternal and professional abilities. According to Stone and Lovejoy (2004), this is not unusual, as issues of self-doubt cause many professional women to abject their careers. They suggest that the 'pull' of children and the reluctance to miss out on their developmental milestones, combined with the compromise of contending pressures of home and work, often leaves mothers feeling that they are left with no option but to relinquish their career ambitions.

Shelton and Johnson (2006) however, suggest that this period of transition may be a purely temporary phase during which Lily was attempting to integrate the competing aspects of mother and teacher into her sense of self. It remains to be seen. Fundamentally she does not have the luxury of choice. Some months before, after realising that the complete renunciation of her career was neither a financial possibility nor a personal aspiration, she had made a conscious decision to return to work. In doing so she had become, what Badinter (2011) terms, a 'Negotiator' - a mother who is aware of the need of raising her child but reluctant to do it on a full time basis. But perhaps she was never fully aware of the reality of her decision,

because now she is struggling to negotiate the different areas of her life so that her dual role of both mother and worker can exist in tandem (Badinter, *ibid.*). Unfortunately, it would appear that only two days in to new role of working mother, negotiations are breaking down. Current reading of her journal would suggest that at present, the balance between Lily's two identities was "fragile and unstable" and "confronted by such conflicting demands, both 'the woman' and 'the mother' feel they are falling short" (Badinter, 2011, p.130). If she has any hope of realising her professional aspirations, she must put aside her doubts and, according to Lewis and Humbert (2010), develop a work-life balance which will enable her to combine her career and family. Wolf (2003) recognises the physical and emotional struggle that mothers face, and calls on society to support them through this difficult and emotional time. I am hopeful at this juncture of my study, that this is merely a passing phase and that Lily is able to draw upon inner reserves to negotiate a way through the veracity of her daily struggles and the incongruity of her internal wrangles, so that she can bring to the fore an inner strength which will drive her on to become, what Friedan (1998) describes as, complete. A complete, happy, fulfilled working mother. Only time will tell.

5.2 Mum, are you awake?

Background.

Lily had been working at her new school for the past five weeks. Although she felt overwhelmed by the amount of work which she was being asked to do, she appeared to enjoy it. The longer the term progressed her charismatic personality and hardworking nature seemed to be 'winning over' the staff and the parents. Governors and County staff had been warm in their praise for the initiatives she had already instigated. By the end of the autumn term she was exhausted, but seemed settled and contented. Other than the academic and organisational

challenges which threatened the official status of the school, her only other area of concern was the emotional and practical implications of having, on occasion, to leave her temporarily sick child.

Text messages sent on Thursday 9th October 2014.

Time: 2.14 am

Hey Mum, I'm so sorry to be a pain. Daisy has been up for hours coughing, vomiting several times and as a result can hardly breathe. If she gets no better would you be able to look after her? If not I totally understand but the poor little thing is struggling. Xxx

P.S. If not I'll text X [her Head teacher] and look after her so don't worry.

Time: 4.35am

Hey, have you seen this?

Time: 6.10 am.

Mum, are you awake?

It was only at this point that I noticed the text messages, but concerned for both Lily and Daisy I rang her shortly after. Lily was in a state of distress. This was the first time that her loyalties had been divided and she was also nervous about having to phone her 'new' Head teacher and explain that she would not be able to come into work that day. I assured her that there was no need for that. I would care for Daisy. She sounded relieved and told me she would come up straight away.

At 7.05am Lily and Daisy arrived on my door step. Lily left for school shortly after and Daisy spent the day playing, watching 'Peppa Pig' and avoiding sleep. Any notion of sickness having disappeared.

Text messages sent on Monday 1st December 2014.

Time: 3.22 am

Mum, can you text me or ring when you wake up? Daisy has been poorly all evening and during the night and I don't think she should go into nursery. I was wondering whether you could look after her. If not I'll ring X. Sorry to bother you xxx.

Time: 6.14 am (Same message is resent).

Mum, can you text me or ring when you wake up? Daisy has been poorly all evening and during the night and I don't think she should go into nursery. I was wondering whether you could look after her. If not I'll ring X. Sorry to bother you xxx.

I rang and they both arrived shortly after. Although uncharacteristically quiet for the first half hour, Daisy quickly resumed her momentum and spent the day 'helping' Granny.

Analysis and discussion.

The stress that Lily experienced when Daisy was unwell and unable to attend her day nursery is evident in both the language and the urgency of her texts and the time at which she sent them. She proposed that if I was unable to care for Daisy then she would contact her Head teacher and stay at home to look after her daughter, however, from my knowledge of my daughter, I knew that she would be reluctant to do this. What I consider to be interesting is her acceptance, that if I am unable to look after my granddaughter then she will have to. Why? Her husband is a classroom teacher, who has less professional responsibility and earns less,

yet it would appear that there had either been no consideration that he should take time off work to look after his daughter **or** he had refused to do so. According to Poduval and Poduval (2009) even in double-income families such as Lily's, it is still the woman who is expected to take care of a sick child or make and negotiate the necessary arrangements for alternative non-formal care. It is, they state, "a calamity that can be difficult to handle". Fortunately for Lily, she had a safety net and was, dare I suggest, calculating in her approach. She painted a picture of my granddaughter in the grips of a raised temperature, vomiting and struggling to breathe, what kind of Grandmother would I be if I refused? If Daisy really was as poorly as the texts suggested, I have no doubt that Lily would have remained at home to care for her, but her use of language emphasised both the struggle she faced and, according to Draper (2013), the strength of our mother – daughter bond. Lily knew that I would put aside any plans which I may have made to look after Daisy. My failure to do so, states Draper (ibid.) would have been tantamount to my being a negligent mother, because "in the case of grandparents, their children's children ought to be as important to them just because they are important to their children" ... if not they are "failing to be a good parent rather than failing to be a good grandparent" (p.314). Lily is lucky. Unlike many mothers, myself included, she does not have to shoulder the burden alone.

The second part of my analysis and discussion will draw heavily on the work of Wheelock and Jones (2002) whose empirical investigation offered strong evidence regarding the essential nature of the complementary childcare provided by grandparents for working parents in Britain and will be further supported by the studies of Draper (2013) and Statham (2011).

According to Davies (2012) the social, emotional and practical support offered by family members has, in recent history, been overly emotionalised. While her research, examining modern motherhood during the period of 1945-2000, was able to offer particular examples of

grandmotherly support, it was also able to cite many more examples of women who, having raised their own families, were unwilling to go through the process again; “You have them, you look after them” (p.22) seemed to be the prevailing attitude. In recent years however, Statham (2011) suggests that there appears to have been a shift in attitudes, and informal care provided by grandparents, especially grandmothers, is becoming increasingly widespread, particularly amongst the more financially disadvantaged families in our society. Due to economic necessity, there have, suggest Wheelock and Jones (2002), been dramatic changes in women’s labour market participation, and almost half of all women with children of school age are now employed, compared with only 25% in the 1980’s. Their research data, supported by the working paper compiled by Statham (2011), suggests that the majority of these women are mothers with children under the age of five, who, for many reasons, including economic necessity, lack of affordable childcare, and a preference for the shared values of a gendered provision, find themselves increasingly reliant on the ‘complimentary’ care provided by their own mothers. These supported criteria would appear to resonate with the principals which underline Lily’s decision making. She intended that Daisy would be cared for by me for two full days a week and attend a day nursery for the following three days. This not only eased the financial burden of full time nursery care, but also provided Lily with the comfort that Daisy was with her maternal grandmother for two fifths of the week, which according to Wheelock and Jones (2002) and Statham (2011) is “the next best thing.” The advantages of this arrangement are also acknowledges by many of the parents interviewed by the Daycare Trust (2000). This survey suggested that with this dual approach to childcare, not only do parents have the reliability of market-care provision but also the familial nurturing presence and support of their mothers who provide care which is “based on values about childrearing that are shared between generations” (p.454). This flexible and often freely given care is, they acknowledge, “best for children, best for parents, and from the grandparents’ point of view,

best for them too”, and perhaps even more importantly, “it comes from love” (ibid. p. 454). According to Wheelock and Jones, (2002) supported by Statham (2011) and Draper (2013) the knowledge that their child is being cared for within the family would suggest a clear parental perception that grandparental care is linked to the well-being of children which in turn is directly linked to the well-being and peace of mind of the mother who is able to pursue her career with a fraction less guilt. Sadly, for those unable to call on this care, the ability to continue with their career is compromised and according to the national charity, 4children (2015), one in five of these mothers will either be forced to reduce their working hours or have to give up work altogether.

Unfortunately the carefully conceived plans which Lily had made for Daisy’s care were thrown into disarray when, towards the end of her maternity leave she was successful in her bid for promotion. Accepting that her new role as Deputy Head teacher carried additional post time-table responsibilities, it was agreed, that both her and Daisy’s needs would be better served if she (Daisy), attended full-time day-care. To compliment this care a more flexible form of support would be provided by me. This involved collecting Daisy from nursery at 4.30pm each day; providing her with her teatime meal and caring for her until her mother returned home from work, between six and six thirty (on Parent Evenings etc. this may be as late as eight thirty) and also caring for her during days of illness. Although this arrangement impacted on Lily financially, she was able to access the Child Voucher Scheme² which helped alleviate some of the fiscal burden. More importantly however, this revised arrangement helped relieve Lily of some of the worry and guilt of trying to balance her professional and maternal roles. The stress of sitting in a leadership, parental or county education meeting and

² Child care vouchers are a Government- approved, tax- efficient way of paying for childcare. If you join the scheme, you can exchange up to £243 a month (£55 a week) of your gross salary for childcare vouchers and not pay the tax on that amount.

having to continuously clock watch and make excuses for extracting herself at an untimely moment, as cited by the mothers in Guendouzi's study (2006), was assuaged and her professional integrity remained unchallenged. And perhaps selfishly on my part, it was also a positive decision for me. Despite having to make myself available for approximately three hours each afternoon, I was relieved of the rigidity, stress and sheer physicality that the full time care of looking after a toddler may have entailed. For, while I was enthusiastic to support my daughter and keen to develop a loving relationship with my granddaughter, having experienced the luxury and flexibility of time, following the raising of my own children, the commitment was, as Davis (2012) suggested it could be, in many ways a reluctant one. As Draper (2013) accedes, and I acknowledge, I am at a stage in my life, unfettered by the binds of professional and maternal commitments and if truth be known, reluctant to relinquish the freedom and lack of responsibility that age and past accomplishments had realised. So, this compromise was fortuitous for all parties, - a balance had been achieved. However, similar to many other grandmothers in Britain today, my initial responsibilities to helping my daughter not only "arise from parental obligations" (Draper 2013, p. 316), but are also carried out because I care about the welfare and wellbeing of my granddaughter, Daisy, and if needed, I will alter my plans, because by sharing in Daisy's care, I also am rewarded with the opportunity to develop and see, what Kitzinger (1996) describes as "the world with freshness and vitality through the eyes of a child" (p.13). As a working mother, I seldom had the luxury of time to sit with my children and examine the ladybird that scurried along the garden wall, or watch the raindrops trickle in patterns down the window, but now as a grandmother I have both the time and the patience, at least for a couple of hours a day!

5.3 Redundancy. A dream I never thought I would have.

Background.

Lily had begun her new role as Deputy Head teacher at a local Catholic school. Half way through the first half-term her Head teacher began to ‘work from home’ or take intermittent ‘sickness days’ each week. Lily’s workload and overall responsibility appeared to increase exponentially.

Excerpt: An edited version of Lily’s journal entry on December 14th 2014

Life seems to have passed by in a blur in recent weeks and I cannot believe we are approaching Christmas! Even as I write these words, the idea that nearly four months has passed since I returned to work following maternity leave seems ludicrous to me. I have barely had time to breath or found time to pee, so how has four months whizzed past in the blink of an eye?...

... My little angel has grown so much and achieved so many things in that short space of times and I haven’t treasured every moment as I’d promised I would. In fact, despite all my promises post inspection that I would put my beloved baby first and work second, in fact I am working harder than ever and later hours than I ever would have done before. Six and half six, I run in apologising for being late, clock watching and waiting for her to go to bed so I could get on with the never ending mountain of paperwork. Even now as I write about it, I almost feel sick. What sort of mother am I that the few precious hours I have with her, I’m either losing my rag because we are running late for work or rushing her up to bed so I can carry on with it!...

In the four months since I took on my new found Deputy Head role, I also took on a new found, and very much unexpected and unwanted, Head's role, as my Head...suddenly disappeared off the face of the Earth... I pity her sickness and, like the good Catholic I am, she often appears in my prayers. So too does the never ending prayer that she will get back to work as I am currently not only teaching year six full time but attempting to run the school on a day to day basis, lead staff meetings, push school improvement and new initiatives, child protection referrals, deal with staffing issues and absence and other general shit that gets dumped on me... It's lovely and all but I haven't got a clue what I am doing...I've never led a school. I didn't even know how to complete a child protection referral form until social services talked me through one! (God help the child I referred!) I have had no training, no mentorship in how to do this role and I've only been in the bloody school for 8 weeks...

I've even informed County and Diocesan advisors that I, the newly appointed, never done leadership before Deputy Head, am running the school...No one seems that concerned.

Slowly I am spiralling and the stress is crippling me. I am exhausted beyond words, my MS fatigue is lurking ominously in the shadows threatening to strike at any point, I cry and shout at everyone and Richard hasn't eaten a good meal in weeks as I range between shop bought pizza and takeaway because the thought of wasting precious hours cooking means not enough time working.

Daisy is the only light in the darkness most days and she spend most of her time either in nursery or with my mum. In fact I think she is starting to love

my Mum more than me. She is so excited to see her and so happy, yet when I appear it's slightly more muted. In the rare moments and weekends I do get to spend with her, she and I thrive. She is like a drug to me and I cannot get enough. I find myself refusing to leave her with Richard so she can be with me at all times. She accompanies me to church, shopping, to visits, the list goes on and on... In fact there isn't a moment I am alone and I can't help but love it. Despite disparaging comments from friends and family about needing me time and time for Richard and I as a couple! Why can't they see...she makes me happy, she makes me better and Richard and I have years ahead of us... I only have a short time ahead of me that she will need or want me.

The conundrum is, secretly I still have love for my job. Granted, these days, its rare moments when I actually get to teach children or lead staff or new initiatives and witness the impact and the positive impact I'm having on the school and it most certainly isn't marking, assessing or updating bloody assessment grids with copious amounts of evidence on Inserts!

At the most recent budget meeting, when the threat of redundancy was announced, I must have been the only member of staff, secretly hoping it might come my way and calculating what sort of pay out I might receive... because, despite the plaudits and the salary, I really would give it all up for Daisy ... So maybe I'm not that selfish after all...Maybe I'll crack this mothering malarkey and find a balance one day so that I'm not some old, shrivelled inspector doling out advice to people just like me...

Analysis and discussion.

My analysis and discussion of this journal excerpt focuses on the competing factions of work/family life and the complications which arise in finding an achievable balance. To assist

in my analysis I will draw heavily on the work of Hakim (1999, 2000, 2003 and 2006) and her plethora of research into women's work preferences and Asher (2011) whose investigation into contemporary parenthood presents the reader with a rich and vivid illustration of how women like Lily manage the stress of being a working mother in modern-day Britain.

The decision to return to work following her pregnancy is, in Lily's case, driven both by necessity and choice. She needed the economic advantages that her salary would provide, but like Asher (2011) she also craved the intellectual stimulation which her career guaranteed, a desire to re-establish her 'place in the world again' (p.6). Fifteen weeks into work however, the harsh reality of what this really entailed was beginning to resonate. As Asher (ibid.) so clearly described, the exclusivity of her maternal identity which she had enjoyed since Daisy's birth, is over. Her identity is now that of a working mother, and if she is to survive, she must establish a routine which will be conducive to both her family and her career. A feat which she currently appears to be struggling to achieve.

Close inspection would suggest however that the main protagonist in her failure to do so would appear to be Lily herself. Similar to the women in Asher's (2011) research, much of Lily's time management issues stem from her personal perceptions and inborn personality. As Asher suggests, she has become invested in her identity, but now her identity is multi-faceted. She is a wife, a mother and a Deputy Head teacher, and although she complains about her lack of time, she is often unwilling to "cede any control" in any of these identities (ibid. p. 140). She complains about her workload, but accepts and completes all the challenges assigned to her. She protests about the lack of time she has to spend with her daughter, but exercises, what Asher (2011) describes as, "maternal gate-keeping³", which she feels is

³ Maternal gate-keeping is a need by mothers' to have their maternal identity validated. According to Asher (2011) it is a phenomenon that restricts male involvement in family life. But it is rooted in the deeper inequalities that shape our existence. It is an attempt by women to adapt to the social structures within which they have grown up and now must operate as mothers, accommodating themselves to their pre-ordained maternal role (p.144).

necessary in maintaining her maternal identity and Daisy's 'love and affection'. She even questions her role as a wife, berating herself for using convenience foods. Why? Rather than delegate some of the responsibility to her husband, her guilt and self-loathing, at not being the perfect housewife, help to ratify Hakim's 1999 findings regarding the 'traditional' and unequal sexual division of home labour. She would appear to be making herself totally accountable and succumbing to, what Asher terms as, "Stockholm syndrome," where women, "start to succumb to, and sympathise with, the dominant male view ... considering themselves lucky to have such an understanding partner" (ibid. p. 145). She appears to be her own worst enemy.

But perhaps my censure is misplaced, perhaps I am allowing my own maternal gatekeeping to take precedence, because Hakim (2003) also suggests that Lily's behaviour is entirely natural. She states that women should not be thought of as a homogeneous group, but as "three contrasting, even conflicting groups with sharply differentiated work and life-style preferences"⁴ (p.55), and Lily is merely displaying the characteristics of a 'work-centred woman'. In fact, Hakim (2003) suggests that Lily's high reaching approach is symptomatic of her innate persona, her career choice and her preference to succeed, all of which, according to Hakim, (2007) are identifiable features of women who are high achievers. Lily has set herself high standards and as Hakim (ibid.) acknowledges, if these are to be achieved, commitment, excellence and a rigorous work ethic is essential, [*irrespective of the cost to her health and well-being*] (italics mine). While fundamentally I would support Hakim's interpretation, on closer examination of her classification table, I would tentatively suggest that Hakim herself is guilty of pigeon holing women. In my opinion, Lily is in fact, trying

⁴ Hakim's Classification of women's work-lifestyle preferences in the 21st century suggests that women fall in to three categories: Home-centred: Women who prefer not to work and whose family and children are the main priorities throughout life. Adaptive: Women who want to combine work and family, but are not totally committed to their career. Work-centred: Women who are committed to work and invest in their qualifications/training for employment.

hard to be the quintessence of both the Work-centred and Adaptive woman i.e. she wants to combine work and family, but she is also focused and committed to achieving excellence in her career in teaching. Consequently she is feeling the pressure from all sides.

On a subjective level, I empathise with Lily's situation, I have occupied the space which she now inhabits, and, she is my daughter and her worries are my worries (Draper, 2013), but when I look objectively at her position, I have to admit that I consider her relatively fortunate. Opportunities unlocked by the passage of time and the fortitude of preceding women have revealed for Lily and her contemporaries, possibilities, opportunities and a degree of autonomy which historically women could only dream of (Davis, 2012). As a working mother in the twenty-first century, she has benefitted from the liberation of what Hakim (1999, 2000, 2003, and 2006) describes as the two great revolutions,⁵ and this hard fought liberation has provided her with choice. She has chosen motherhood, and although driven by economic necessity, she has also chosen to work - now she must choose the most constructive way of achieving a satisfactory balance between the two. Hopefully, once she settles into her role as Deputy Head, and as Daisy matures, her burden will be lightened. But that is a hope for her future, for now, it would appear that she must learn to surrender some of the more controlling aspects of her persona and encourage and accept the support of her husband, for as Asher (2011) states, if we [women] are to build upon the achievements of our ancestors and tackle the problems which face working mothers, change is required. Irrespective of one's own work ethic or high sense of responsibility the effort must be shared, because "equality is interdependent" (p.185). Ultimately until Lily accepts that this distribution of responsibilities is not a sign of failure but an accedence of liberation, she will continue to be faced with the

⁵ The contraceptive revolution allowed women to access methods of contraception which can be controlled by women themselves. The Equality revolution was legislation which made sex discrimination unlawful and enabled the introduction of equal opportunities policies.

dilemma of managing, what Davies, (2012) describes as, a role “fraught with contradictions and ambiguities (p.207).

5.4 Longing for the challenge of work?

Final Interview with Lily on January 18th 2015

Background.

Lily had been employed at her new school in the capacity of Deputy Head teacher for the past term. The school, having previously been in ‘Special Measures’, had been waiting anxiously for the Monday morning call advising them of a further inspection – which as yet has not materialised. Lily’s Head teacher had spent much of the term away from school on sick leave and unfortunately for Lily, a self-confessed workaholic and perfectionist, the main burden of resurrecting the schools performance and reputation would appear to have fallen on her shoulders.

A semi-structured interview which took place following Lily’s return to school after the Christmas holiday.

EM: What was your reason for returning to work?

Lily: Well I had no choice really. For financial reasons, but by the time I went back I was ... eh, I want to say longing for the challenge of work ... I missed the challenge of work, but ideally had I had had the finances, I probably have stayed off a lot longer. I so enjoyed being with Daisy, but I did miss some sort of stimulation from work, but I knew that I wouldn’t miss the pressure that came with it, so it was a bit of a double edged sword really.

EM: What concerns did you have about returning to work?

She explained in detail the conversation she'd had with her husband regarding her work life balance and the difficulty she has in trying to achieve it. Then continued:

Lily: *I become consumed, wrapped up in my work and I get a buzz from it, but at the same time I've got Daisy and she's everything I ever dreamed of and I didn't want it to impact on her or my time with her, so I had concerns about how I was going to find the balance, because I found it [the job] hard when I didn't have a baby, so with having a baby I could foresee it being more difficult. I was worried about the pressure, because I was taking on a bigger role ... had I taken on too much? I had all these new pressures at home, having a new baby. I barely knew what I was doing at home so to take on a role that was going to be totally out of my comfort zone ... was that taking a step too far?*

EM: What support have you found useful in supporting your return to work?

Lily: *I didn't think that initially I would enjoy the whole nursery process, but now, knowing that she is in a constant, reliable environment it's beneficial for me. I know no matter what happens, at eight o'clock when I drop her off there will be someone there to look after her and take care of her ... my family as well, my mum, picking her up, giving her tea, being there for late meetings ... without these people I wouldn't be able to cope ... I don't feel so guilty ... because I know she's with people who love her, people who take as good care of her as I would ... which helps to ease my guilt, which seems to be a never ending feeling.*

EM: How has motherhood affected your identity as a teacher?

Lily: *I suppose in some respects it's helped prepare me for leadership, because now I know that for all the children in my school, I want for them what I would want for Daisy, which is only the very best ...*

She continues by explaining her interactions with the staff and how she feels they should communicate with parents. She continues ...

I wouldn't have had that perspective previously. It's given me empathy ... by giving them [parents] five minutes more of my time, to reassure them and make them feel better will make all the difference to that parent, so I think I've become a better leader. But sometimes I have this huge pressure bearing down on me, and it's suffocating and drowning me at times and there's nowhere to go.

EM: If you had returned to just a classroom role, do you think you would have been under the same pressure?

Lily: *Probably not in the same way. There would still have been pressures, because that's the nature of the job, self-imposed pressures, because I was fairly accomplished at what I did, so I could have found a balance and just pottered along ... in some ways I think if I hadn't taken up the challenge I probably would have allowed myself to just plod along and perhaps allowed myself to be the best I could be, whereas now ... every time I do something good I get that buzz I used to get, but I don't know ...*

EM: How difficult was the transition from full time worker to full time working mother?

Lily: *It was emotional. I'd cry on the way to work every day after I dropped Daisy off. It's just finding a routine and a balance and I'm not achieving that*

effectively. I have days when I get into nursery on time and I get to work and everything runs like clockwork and then we have days when I'm like a headless chicken. So it's finding a balance and routine, that's an ongoing struggle ... I need to be prepared at every step.

EM: What are the challenges you face?

Lily: *A lack of time ... the sense of being on a never ending conveyer belt ... until you shut your eyes for a short amount of time at night you are pretty much on the go all the time. I think the sense of guilt is my overriding emotion most of the time. I'm guilty if I'm late picking Daisy up, guilty if I'm too tired to make tea, I feel guilty if I'm desperate to put Daisy to bed early cos I'm tired, I feel guilty if I haven't spent enough time playing with her ... I think for me it's really hard not to beat myself up about every little thing ... but it's worth it for her.*

EM: Does your work provide you with the satisfaction you anticipated it would?

Lily: *Erm ... yes and no. When I step inside the classroom and I'm hands on and I'm with people, I know it's what I wanted to do and it's worthwhile; and then when I'm sat behind a stack of paperwork that means absolutely jack-shit to anyone – no, I don't get any sense of achievement. But when I speak to that little child in the dinner hall who tells me how much they have enjoyed doing something that I have organised, then I know this is what I want to do. [She gesticulates animatedly as if illustrating the height of the paperwork and when talking about the little boy she places both hands on her heart].*

EM: If you go on to have another pregnancy in the future, is there anything you would do differently?

Lily: At this point, I can't imagine having another child. I don't see how it would be viable ... but if I did, I don't think I could imagine myself working full time. I can barely get out of the door with Daisy of a morning and keep all the plates spinning, so to have two[children] to run around ... erm, especially as they grow older and have to do after school clubs and things like that. ... My career doesn't define me, it gives me a bit of gravitas, but if I had to choose between the two [motherhood or her career] it wouldn't be a choice [shakes her head as if to confirm her choice].

EM: Prompt: If you were able to remain home from work until the children were school age would you return then?

Lily: I'd ... you get left on the pile. You end up being nothing. To stay in leadership you have to be in it, be there to keep on top of all the changes, all the trends and all the developments, so I just can't see it being a feasible option. I think if I were to take a step out of it at all, I'd probably have to go into a different career.

Analysis and discussion.

As the survey carried out by the National Childbirth Trust (NCT) (2014) supported by Page (2013) acknowledges, the decision to return to work following the birth of one's baby may be challenging and angst ridden, but for many women, myself included, it is a welcome one. And despite the air of despondency in Lily's interview, I believe that ultimately it is the right one for her. Analysis of her interview would suggest that the anxiety she was experiencing was not focused on her 'abandonment' of Daisy, or the arrangements she had made for her care,

or the status of Daisy's happiness. These previously anticipated fears appear to have been allayed, and even though she expresses the desire to covet more quality time with her daughter, it is for her personal gratification rather than any detrimental aspect of the attention which Daisy is receiving. Fundamentally, Lily is content with the arrangements, both formal and complimentary that she has made for Daisy's care and well-being and this confidence is, according to Page (2013) a self-acceptance that she is not a 'bad mother'.

What appeared to be the main focus of Lily's fretfulness and guilt is time or the lack of it. Having made the decision to be a working mother, now the challenge was how to fit it all in. It is a quandary acknowledged by Sikes (1997) and also by Asher (2011) who described it as being "the sharp end of dealing with the pressure that all mothers in paid work find themselves under" (p.86). If sleep was not an absolute necessity the struggle to be, what Page (2013) describes as, a 'good working mother' would be less challenging. However, this would appear to be the norm for many working mothers (Hilbrecht et al., 2008). According to the survey carried out by the National Childcare Trust (2008), 55% of mothers surveyed said that because of the need to manage multiple responsibilities, there was never enough time to do everything, and that given the choice, mothers would allocate their time differently. However, keen to maintain their professional credibility many of the mothers surveyed admitted to increased levels of 'organisation citizenship behaviour' ⁶ (2008). According to Cusk (2008) for women such as these, Lily included, work is as vital to their identity as motherhood, and they try to put equal measures of energy and commitment into both their family and their jobs, "to spend time with their kids but also get the affirmation, sense of purpose and achievement that paid work can bring" (p.87). A driven attitude and positive approach to working/lifestyle preferences is recognised by Hakim (2000; 2006) and acknowledged by high profile achievers

⁶ Organisation Citizenship Behaviour (OCB) – working over and above one's job description.

like Dame Stella Rimington (2013), as being absolutely necessary if women are to maintain the trajectory of their career which they had worked hard to achieve. While Wolf (2003) acknowledges the benefit of having a professional identity for one's self-esteem, she also suggests however, that this can lead to exploitation. She suggests that most working mothers have the sword of Solomon hanging over them, that in fact, corporate life relies on it "it is useful leverage in pressurising women of all classes into giving in, in different ways, to unequal deals, negotiated hesitantly from the place of vulnerability that is one's concern for one's child"(p.228). They work harder and longer to prove that they are 'up to' the job and can't be accused of being less competent now they have become a mother. And, as Lily suggested, any prolonged interruption can also prove detrimental According to Stone and Lovejoy (2007) career breaks or transition to part time work are frequently accompanied by the stigma that your career is derailing and that you are now on the "Mommy Track" (p.69) heading towards career wilderness. Thus, the internal angst that many mothers suffer would appear to be self-perpetuating. But should it be such a struggle? Asher (2011) states it should not. Equality of child care and household responsibilities and the implementation of nationally adopted workplace strategies, should enable women the same time and opportunities that men have to pursue their career. After all, as Asher (ibid.) comments, nobody asks the new father if he is going to return to work after the birth of his child. Why? Possibly the answer lies within ourselves. As women we are used to exerting so much energy into carrying out our multiple roles and "fitting the pieces of the jigsaw together", that we have "no energy left to confront the complex web of limitations that trap us" (Cusk, 2008, p.139). Perhaps, hard as it may be, we must cast aside our weariness and dig deeper still and in order to free ourselves (Asher, 2011).

5.5 My reflexive appraisal of the third trimester.

Reflecting on the data of this third and final trimester of my study has involved a mixed bag of emotions. In some ways it has been cathartic, but in other ways the cause of great anxiety. It calls me to question whether my encouragement of Lily, to continue her career, has been detrimental to her well-being. Her perceived challenges of returning to her teaching career are laid bare, and they are a cause for concern. Ultimately, in the fullness of time, I believe the decision she has made will be proven to be the right one. The opportunity to be part of a decision making team which can transform the quality and standing of a school's reputation and the lives of the pupils, is, I believe, too great an opportunity to overlook. But again, I must question whether this is my vision and not Lily's - reading her journal I am beginning to wonder. Were my motives entirely honest when I encouraged her to pursue this promotion? Was it the right time for her? Should I have been less vocal of my image for the trajectory of her professional calling? Was my influence too great? Images of Rose Thompson Hovick, the manipulative mother of Gypsy Rose Lee, dance through my thoughts. Have I, like her, encouraged my daughter to chase my unfulfilled aspirations? Is she now having to stand in the spotlight, stripped of the security of my praise and having to demonstrate her ability to the disinterested and fairly sceptical audience of her new school environment? Perhaps to a small degree this may be true, but in my defence I would suggest that my intentions were entirely honourable. Perhaps the timing of her promotion was unfortunate and maybe a twelve month period for settling into working motherhood would have been more beneficial, however the opportunity of a Deputy Headship may never have materialised twelve months down the line. Having emerged from an Estyn inspection with the recognition and admiration that she had, together with the enticement of a school catchment and community that were familiar to her, she was ideally situated to accept this as being the appropriate time to progress her

professional standing. And yes, I was vocal in my encouragement. In my opinion, if the school was in Special Measures, then there was only one way to go, and that was up! And yes, I felt my daughter had the talent to help this school on its journey. Children deserve the best, and proud or pushy I may be, I believe that my daughter is an inspirational teacher and has the potential to be an motivational leader and I would be negligent in my duty as her mother and lacking in my role as an educator if I had failed to encourage her in the fulfilment of her aspirations. Ultimately my aspirations for her success are altruistic. Am I living through her? No, but my genes are part of her DNA, the great umbilical of our unity, while not a controlling link, is a life giving, empowering gift and these are not my past aspirations that she is satisfying, but her future aims that she is realising – albeit with a little help and encouragement from her Mum.

However, despite my spirited support for combining career advancement with motherhood, I also recognise the difficulties that it brings, some of which have emerged in my study.

I too am able to recall the ordeal of being a working mother faced with the turmoil of having a sick child. All the carefully planned operational and logistical tactics which, until that moment, had been carried out with military precision and vital to one's professional existence are thrown to the wind. It doesn't matter how early in the morning you rise, or how carefully calibrated and rigorous a schedule you have created, if your child is not cared for by a personal nanny then chaos ensues, and unfortunately the burden of the dilemma generally falls on the shoulders of the mother. I cringe when I think of the number of occasions when during their childhood I sent my own children into school with a cold or a pain in their tummy, telling them to "see how they feel later" or "tell Mrs Morgan to call me if you don't feel better," praying that the call would never come. Both of my children attended the Infant school where I was Deputy Head teacher and both can recall the occasions they spent sitting or lying against

the cushions in my 'quiet area' while curious little heads peeped at them over the book cases just so I could fulfil my teaching commitment. On such occasions, books and preparatory work which would normally have been attended to on school premises, after my class had been dismissed, were bundled along with my children, into the car and taken home to complete. The evening would be spent dosing my child with Calpol in the hope that he/she would recover for the following day or if that appeared unlikely, attempting to negotiate the logistics of their care. Fortunately I had a very sympathetic Head teacher, who was a mother herself and I never overplayed my hand. But the instances when either of my children were ill for more than just a day were extremely fraught. These would often lead to periods of bickering between my husband and myself as to who could warrant taking time away from their professional duties. Invariably it was left to me.

When, at the end of my teaching career, I left to assume a role in the business my husband and I had established, and the contrast was stark. Working from home meant that when either of my children was ill, there was no tension, no negotiations, and instead of cajoling them to go to school and see how they felt later in the day, I actively encouraged them to stay in bed while I nursed and cared for them through their illness. The difference lay in the fact that I was only answerable to myself and my conscience and my children could now be my main priority. I was still a working mother, but when the need arose I was able to abandon my professional post and not relegate my maternal one. Self-employment not only salved my conscience it also allowed and encouraged the bonds of our attachment to become re-connected.

As suggested in my introduction, data collected during this final trimester of my research has been the source of some personal anxiety. Ultimately the content of Lily's journal holds no surprises for me, her worries being frequently discussed during our daily summits, but seeing

them in print has, on occasion, caught me unawares. I feel guilty. In a similar way to how Lily feels about Daisy, I too am feeling guilty about my daughter's well-being. Perhaps I hadn't realised just how much the pressure of her new professional position was effecting both her emotional and physical welfare. Perhaps I should have thought less about her potential for leadership and more about her physical needs. She has Relapsing Remitting MS and though she is so brilliant in coping that it would be hard to detect that she suffers from the condition, – it is a fact. But perhaps it is a fact that I have been trying hard to conceal – to conceal from myself. I remember the devastation I felt when, the day before I was diagnosed with breast cancer, my daughter was told she has MS. If possible, it brought us even closer. We were fighting together, and together we came through the bleakest of times. But the shadow of it remains and any sign that she may be suffering from a relapse has the potential to send me into a silent panic. During her pregnancy and in the postpartum months following, even without the support of her medication (which was detrimental to the developing foetus and during breastfeeding) she was so well, but now it would appear that the stress and the sheer physicality of her new role, may cause her to relapse and I chide myself that the probable blame for that may lie squarely on my shoulders. My well-meaning encouragement and persistence that she should push herself for career advancement, may have the potential for disaster. I pray that it won't and silently vow that I will do more to assist her so that this part of her journey is less rocky and the pitfalls less debilitating.

These worries are further compounded by the data collected from Lily's final interview. In fact following the interview, Lily turned to me and commented, "Oh my God, do I sound like a total depressive?" And I suppose in some respects there are certainly elements of someone who is struggling with aspects of depression brought on by anxiety and guilt. I hope that this is a transitory phase. During that period of time she was in a state of flux. Both her professional and maternal roles were comparatively new and she felt secure in neither. Also the sheer

amount of work which had been placed on her shoulders was exhausting, so exhausting that Mr. J her MS Consultant had prescribed Amantadine to help combat the overwhelming tiredness which had become an increasing symptom of her condition. I had witnessed the pressure building. Since the middle of the autumn term, during our frequent conversations, she had described the volume of work which had been assigned to her and the list appeared endless. Listening to her and wearing both my professional and maternal hat, I became both protective but also critical. Theoretically, all the worries regarding my daughter's psychological and physical health came to the fore, so I spent much of my time talking through issues and offering advice. Practically, I went into school one day each week to assist with her classroom displays and art and craft projects which, because of the sheer capacity of her workload were in danger of falling by the wayside. Professionally I was astounded that such substantial areas of responsibility should be delegated to an inexperienced colleague at such an early stage in their leadership role and that a programme of professional mentoring, which in my opinion is so vital to the development of future school leaders, was being neglected. Fortunately Lily is driven by her love of teaching and her knowledge that she is making a difference. It is the same feeling which kept me going all those years ago. It is the sense of achievement and satisfaction, of having done a good job, of basking in one's professional identity and knowing that you've made a difference.

Chapter Six: Research Findings

My study aimed to explore the lived reality of this young teacher's life. During the first two trimesters I wanted to discover how she perceived her experience of maternity and motherhood, and in the third trimester, when she had returned to her teaching role, to discover to what extent, if any, her professional identity had been affected by her maternal role and what she perceived the effects of being a mother were on her life/work balance.

6.1 First and Second Trimester

Motherhood for Lily proved to be not only a physically demanding role, but also one which subjected her to a whole tapestry of psychological and emotional challenges, many of which impacted on the very essence of her identity and damaged the equilibrium of her professional and individual authority. My study found that almost immediately, during the first trimester, the joy and excitement of Lily's impending motherhood was quickly accompanied by feelings of anxiety and guilt and a loss of identity and power. As Oakley (2005) suggested, institutionally, her underlying medical condition was used as the basis for medical intervention which dictated the final stages of her pregnancy and left Lily feeling powerless, frightened and deflated. Gradually, as her pregnancy progressed, her power and control was eroded. Similar to Cusk (2008) and Wolf (2003), pressure from her medical consultant, that her baby would be small and have an underdeveloped lung capacity, was given as grounds for an elective caesarean and a premature delivery. It was a decision which was made autonomously by her obstetrician. Lily had little input. Instead, naïve, anxious and reliant on the advice of the experienced medical team, she was compliant in her acceptance of their 'expertise,' and although she was grateful for the safe delivery of her daughter, the medical manipulation of the latter stages of her pregnancy caused her disappointment and distress and spoiled the holistic experience of her pregnancy and the actual delivery of her daughter. My

findings suggest that the overwhelming concern of the medical staff was for the quick and safe delivery of the child, which although essential, allowed for scant attention to be given to the emotional impact it was placing on Lily, who was left with feelings of personal failure at her inability to carry her baby to full term, and allowed her autonomy and identity to become a target for disempowerment.

And this disempowerment began to seep through into other facets of her life. While lack of knowledge required her to accept the pronouncements of the medical fraternity, it could hardly be blamed for its materialisation in the educational environment within which she taught. In line with the theories purported by de Beauvoir (1949), Sikes (1997), Rich (1986), Oakley (1979) and Wolf (2003) my study found that her fellow educational professionals also began to view her in a different light. As her belly expanded, her autonomy and identity appeared to diminish. The power and control which she had previously exercised in her work and the trajectory of her career appeared to be swept aside, her future potential disregarded, on the basis of her pregnancy. On at least two recorded occasions her identity as a successful, aspirant teacher was dismissed by ‘gatekeepers’, both of whom were male, who suggested through their actions, that in their eyes her professional identity had been usurped by her maternal one. While the first occasion resulted in tearful self-admonishment, the second occasion was especially worrying, as it had the potential not only to tarnish her self-esteem but also to derail the progression of her career advancement. She summed up her anger and frustration when she wrote:

In his eyes ... having a baby or being on maternity leave would automatically discount me from being eager to progress my career or to take advantage of such an excellent opportunity to take the next step.... The idea that having a baby meant that all my past desires and aspirations for my career would be totally dismissed. (Journal entry)

Sikes (1997), suggests that this negative attitude exists in many societies and is both dangerous and oppressive because it defines a women “solely in terms of their ability to give birth; [and] it casts them in a subordinate role” (p.42).

Similarly, this shift in Lily’s identity also began to invade the personal relationship she had with her partner. During the third trimester of my research, when she became a mother, my findings showed that the authority and independence which she had previously enjoyed within her personal relationship was often subjugated. A primary example of this was regarding the baby sensory classes when Daisy was only a few months old. Although a qualified teacher, with a reputation for excellence for both her teaching and behavior management of children, her partner now appeared to doubt her capability to stimulate and provide creative opportunities for their baby. Rather than stand her ground and be confident in her own decision making, she yielded to the pressure he placed upon her. It would appear her self-esteem was plummeting and she no longer felt assured in her own judgements. According to Gerhardt (2004), Lily should have remained strong and rather than spending the limited time of her maternity leave amongst the company of well-intentioned theorists, she should have followed her own nurturing instinct and been confident and forthright in her decision to spend her time with Daisy in the way which suited her, i.e. surrounding her baby with the love and security of her maternal presence. But Lily appeared to be succumbing to the loss of power and identity that Sikes (1997), Oakley (1979) and Friedan (1963) identified. Her power seemed to be ebbing slowly away and she appeared to be in danger of becoming the embodiment of de Beauvoir’s ‘Other’. And despite the fact that she found great contentment in her maternal role, her psychological well-being was at risk of being damaged. This juxtaposition of emotions is recognised by de Beauvoir (1949) who stated, “Shut up in the home, woman cannot herself establish her existence; she lacks the means requisite for self-

affirmation as an individual; and in consequence her individuality is not given recognition” (p.541).

My findings illustrate how this pattern of poor self-esteem and lack of power and autonomy continued to be a major feature throughout the second trimester of my study. Like Rich (1986), although Lily found great satisfaction in her maternal role, all other areas of her life appeared to be compromised. This was in part due to her growing financial dependence. As her maternity pay steadily reduced, she felt the stark reality of the loss of her economic emancipation. The freedom she had previously enjoyed as a professional woman was slowly eroded, and almost childlike, she was reduced to asking her husband, and on occasion her parents, for money. This resulted in an unwelcome accountability, a compromise of choices and a further blow to her self-esteem. Similar to Asher’s (2011) experience, my findings show that towards the end of Lily’s maternity leave, the balance of power, both with her partner and her parents, was unstable. Its undermining effect impacted on how she conducted her life; decisions which she would have made autonomously were now discussed and sometimes rejected, the rhythm of her day was questioned – for a short period of time she became a captive of what Friedan (1963) christened ‘the feminine mystique’ and another casualty of ‘the problem that has no name’ (p.5).

Whether it was the imbalance of the fiscal side of their partnership or the alteration of Lily’s identity, from professional equal to stay-at-home mother, it is difficult to determine, but my findings illustrate how, like the women in Oakley’s (1979, 2005) study, following the birth of their baby and her partner’s return to work, the dynamic of Lily’s domestic relationship changed considerably. Up to the point of her maternity leave Richard, her husband, had always contributed to the domestic duties, however, following his return to work, the equilibrium of the previous household arrangements would appear to have become completely overturned.

Not only did Lily undertake the lion's share of responsibility for Daisy, both during the day and the night, she also had total responsibility for all of the household chores. It would appear that Richard, in bringing home the 'financial bacon,' felt justified in relinquishing all of his household duties, and Lily, had to assume the mantle of housewife, mother and general factotum. Initially she did not appear to object to this arrangement, in fact by assuming absolute control of her home, she appeared to reinstate her power. However, as Friedan (1963) predicted, this initial enjoyment quickly began to wane and her frustration became increasingly noticeable. Despondency, exhaustion and apathy set in. On several occasions Lily appeared to display classic signs of increasing submission. Her wearied declaration - "*you're nothing, just because you're not going out to work*" (field notes) appears to illustrate how she had become the personification of de Beauvoir's 'Other'.

6.2 Third Trimester

The third trimester of my study collected and analysed data from the period after Lily had resumed her teaching career. My findings illustrate how the joy of taking on her new role as Deputy Head was reined in by the guilt of leaving Daisy in the care of others. Her agony at leaving her daughter was emotionally recorded in her journal, "*I have a real pain in my heart and my eyes are welling up thinking of her being on her own with strangers*". She is perhaps the quintessence of Kristava's (1986) Stabat Mater – 'Stood the Mother full of Grief'. In it Kristeva (ibid.) wrote of the connection she felt with her child, how her joy at his birth was also tinged with suffering because from this point on she would feel the pain of all that her child endures. Using the analogy of Mary watching Jesus dying on the cross, she suggests that as the sword pierced Jesus' side, Mary too felt the pain. A mother will do anything to relieve her child's suffering and if she cannot then she too will feel his pain, "she succumbs to it. 'And you, one day a sword will pass through your soul'" (p.104). My findings show that at

this point of my study Lily had succumbed to the pain. She was pained by the thought that she had abandoned her child, and pained by the guilt of enjoying her work *“I am constantly plagued with doubts ... so I guess better to do a well-paid hard job than a boring crap paid one!”*

Fortunately, as pained as she was, Lily’s self-perceived abandonment of Daisy was gradually alleviated by the care she witnessed her daughter receiving as she settled into the routine of nursery. My research showed how selecting a suitable nursery had been one of the major challenges for Lily. Aside from the suitability of the environment, the key issue appeared to be her desire that Daisy should enjoy a ‘loving’ relationship with her key childcare providers. Her priority had not been in finding a nursery which was a centre of academic excellence, but, similar to the participants’ in Page’s study (2013), to find one which would care for her daughter in a similar way to how she herself did. My findings showed that Lily, possibly in an effort to expunge her maternal guilt at having to leave Daisy, was more concerned that her child was looked after by loving carers, who were more concerned with her happiness than her reading age, that her days are filled with kindness and compassion rather than a tick list of criteria which determined its Ofsted/Estyn rating. Thus, although during the initial weeks of the autumn term she still worried about leaving Daisy with ‘these strangers’, as the term progressed, and both she and her daughter developed a relationship with the staff, even though she continued to miss her daughter, her guilt was tempered by the knowledge that Daisy was with people who really cared for her. In her final interview she stated:

Knowing that she is in a constant, reliable environment ... it’s beneficial for me. I know no matter what happens, at eight o’clock, when I drop her off, there will be someone there to look after her ... people who take as good care of her as I would.

However, even though one of the main sources of her worry had apparently been eased, Lily continued to struggle. As Badinter (2011) contended, my findings highlighted the double edged nature of her turmoil. She wanted to work and she wanted to be a mother, but combining the two appeared to be having a detrimental impact on her psychological well-being. Although she enjoyed the reclamation of her professional identity and the fiscal independence which her enhanced career role afforded, Lily's satisfaction was blighted by an emotional roller coaster of guilt, a guilt which was all pervading and which impacted negatively on her self-esteem. While I would suggest that much of this guilt was misconceived and self-imposed, as Sikes (1997), Kristeva (1986) and Friedan (1963) each acknowledge, for a mother it is still real. Lily suffered the guilt of 'abandoning' her daughter; the guilt of being an 'unsatisfactory' wife; the guilt of not being a 'good enough' mother and the guilt of 'selfishly' wanting to pursue her professional goals. Lily summed it up in her final interview when she stated:

I think the sense of guilt is my overriding emotion most of the time. I'm guilty if I'm late picking I up, guilty if I'm too tired to make tea, I feel guilty if I'm desperate to put Daisy to bed early cos I'm tired, I feel guilty if I haven't spent enough time playing with her ... I think for me it's really hard not to beat myself up about every little thing.

On the surface, she appeared to be enjoying her elevated professional position and knowing that she was making a difference. It helped her to regain her autonomy and power which Friedan (1963), supported by The Working Mother's Research Institute (2011), considered to be so vital. But my findings also revealed how this satisfaction was continually challenged by her overriding sense of responsibility for her husband and child. And as Cusk (2008) and Asher (2011) both attested to, lack of time to accomplish all of her pre-set daily objectives only added to her guilt. Holding down a more demanding professional role, managing the care of her

daughter and continuing the domestic role assumed during her maternity leave, left her exhausted and unsatisfied because, being the perfectionist she was, she felt that she was doing none of them well and she felt that she was tackling them alone. Her situation appeared to reflect Oakley's (1979) summation, "birth, a joint achievement, unites husband and wife, the baby, a maternal responsibility divides them". (p.227).

Eventually the reality of her situation began to take its toll, she began to question her ability to juggle all of the facets of her new life. Although relatively undemanding, Lily's partner, did little to alleviate the physical burden of her load, so tasks were left undone, meals were produced via the microwave, and this only served to amplify her feelings of self-loathing and guilt. Lily's situation is reflective of Oakley's (2005) later research, which stated that although there is a more equitable distribution of power in today's marriages, the notion that marriage is an "egalitarian relationship" is misguided. She concludes that today, women like Lily are just juggling even more responsibilities - domestic duties, jobs outside of the home and the main responsibility of care for children (p.101). My findings show that this is the reality of Lily's life and that it would appear Asher's (2011) plea for men and women to meet in the middle, so that they can share equally in both the responsibilities and pleasures of life, and "create a more equal society of which we can be proud" (p.210) is an appeal which at present has fallen on deaf ears.

Although her return to work brought many and various challenges, my findings also show that ultimately, it was also the catalyst for the reclamation of her identity as a powerful, autonomous woman. The restricted factors of her maternity leave had created a dependency and a division of power which both institutionally and emotionally was alien to her nature and feminist identity. Her return to work as a professional teacher helped to redress that imbalance. Friedan (1963) would have been proud, because instead of casting aside her potential, in the

hope that motherhood would offer her total fulfilment, she harnessed the positivity and maturity that her maternal character had enabled and used it to access her future identity of a successful working mother. Acknowledging Friedan's rallying cry that "the line between mystique and reality dissolves" Lily embodied "the split in the image", she renegotiated her identity and regained her power and became what Friedan describes as "a real woman" (p.41). Now her main challenge would appear to be, how to find a balance which will satisfy the demands she makes on herself as a mother, a wife and a teaching professional. But I have to question whether this elusive balance is ever really achievable?

Having negotiated her route back into teaching it is important to ensure that for working mothers like Lily the support which they may need is available. Unfortunately, my research has found, that although advancements have been made in equality of pay and career opportunities for women, when they become mothers, the caveats which restrict their full, confident participation remain as much an obstacle for them as they did for me. My study showed that Lily found the challenges of being a working mother both physically and mentally exhausting and at times she has suggested that given the choice she would not continue to be one. But she also recognised the underlying dilemma of her situation, because beneath her fatigue and frustration she acknowledged that "*when I step inside the classroom and I'm hands on ... I know it's what I want to do and it's worthwhile*". She also acknowledged that abandoning her career now, would probably limit her aspirations for headship. As she suggested, "*you get left on the pile. You end up being nothing*". Lily has decided to take up this challenge, but it begs the question of how many talented, inspirational women we may be losing from the teaching profession, teachers who, if their workload was rationalised might be tempted to stay for the benefit of all our children's' futures and their own. Lily has already experienced what it was like to lose sight of her identity and suffer the suppression of her

power, for a brief time to become what de Beauvoir (1949) termed 'Other'. My findings appear to suggest that it is not an experience that she is keen to repeat.

In conclusion, my study opened wide a window through which I could observe Lily's journey into motherhood. It exposed the physical and emotional challenges which she battled along the way, and revealed how, even though the gateway towards emancipation and equality for women has been unlocked, for working mothers like Lily, the highway beyond remains an 'un-adopted' route, a road beset with potholes and side-roads which all too often terminate in child-free zones. Lily has chosen to negotiate her way along this road and this, I believe, is a positive step, both for her and for the children she teaches. Sikes (1997) would appear to agree. She acknowledges that it is important that mothers like Lily return to teaching because motherhood changes them as teachers. She stated, "having my own children has made aspects of my teaching a great deal easier and possibly more effective!" (p.8). Lily summed it up beautifully herself when she stated, "*Now I know that for all the children in my school, I want for them, what I want for Daisy, which is only the best*". As a society, these are the teachers we need because in their eyes 'Every Child Matters'.

Conclusion

This qualitative study set out to understand the lived reality of a young teacher's life as she navigated the changing landscape of her first pregnancy, the birth of her child and her subsequent return to work as a full-time teacher. It sought to answer the following questions:

How does this teacher perceive her experience of maternity, motherhood and return to teaching?

To what extent is this teacher's professional identity affected by her maternal role?

What are the perceived effects of being a mother upon her life/work balance?

It provided a story of two parts. Firstly, it told the story of a woman who appeared to reach the pinnacle of her maternal realisation and secondly a story of emotional turmoil, of a woman, who in becoming a working mother, struggled with a series of complex issues; the guilt and anxiety of leaving her child in the care of others; exhaustion and frustration at having to undertake a multiplicity of household centred tasks, and the commitment, self-sacrifice and dedication required for the continuation and advancement of her career.

While in some respects Lily's story is an acknowledgement of the advancement that women have made in their fight for equality of education, pay and career opportunities, it also laid bare the unambiguous problems which women continue to face when they become working mothers, difficulties which must call into question the truthfulness of their gender equality. The evidence of her journal narratives allowed me to examine her perception of how her life altered when she became a mother and provided a window of opportunity to study her insight of society's reaction to her changing identity. They provided evidence of prejudice, disempowerment, anxiety and guilt and a cultural bias towards women who choose to become mothers, and key insights into episodes which exposed moments of patriarchal arrogance, incidents which had the potential to 'flat line' her professional advancement, destroy her self-

esteem and submerge her identity beneath a cloak of anonymity until she became, for a short time, what de Beauvoir (1949) termed the 'Other' and her situation, what Friedan (1963) labelled 'the problem that has no name'. Although Lily was able to redress the balance of her autonomy when she resumed her professional career it came at a cost. Rather than impacting on the quality of her work or on the care of her child it just increased the guilt and the lack of time which she had for herself.

My work adds to and supports the findings of Sandmark (2015), who in a recent Radio Four interview suggested that even in the enlightened culture of Sweden, working mothers are suffering under the strain of their increased workload. She stated that, "those who can't cope with the double burden of children, home and working full-time often suffer from mental illness"(10th November). My study demonstrated how the strain of coping with a multiplicity of roles impacted on Lily's health and psychological well-being and brought her to the point where she felt there was no equilibrium, and she began to question the practicality of her career and life style choices. De Beauvoir (1949) used the analogy of the little mermaid to describe the turmoil women endure for the love of their partner, I presume to do the same to describe Lily's transition to being a working mother "Every woman in love with [*her child*] recognises herself in Hans Anderson's little mermaid who exchanged her fishtail for a woman's legs for love, and then found herself walking on needles and burning coals" (p.664, italics mine).

I believe that my work has contributed current empirical evidence, which supports the argument that motherhood has an overwhelming effect on a woman's life. It highlights the need for realistic descriptions of maternity which lay bare the challenges of motherhood so that a more holistic approach can be adopted by society which will facilitate not only the health and growth of the baby, but also the emotional and practical support required by the

woman in her rebirth as a new 'Mother.' It also questions the reality of women's equality, especially when they become working mothers. The narratives of my study suggest that although women are now more likely to achieve educational and professional equality than women of my generation, in practice, when they become mothers, the obstacles and dilemma's which I had to overcome remain a significant feature of their lived reality. The anxiety and guilt in leaving my child to return to my teaching role would appear to be no different from the anxiety and guilt that my daughter is experiencing. The exhaustion and role juggling is as much of a prominent feature in her life as it was in mine. And although it is now commonplace for a mother to return to paid employment following the birth of a child it would appear that equality of pay and position continue to be prey to the idiosyncratic deliberations of subjective line managers who so easily dismiss a woman's potential when she assumes the maternal role.

In conclusion, my study has revealed that the complexities of motherhood today are numerous and the impact they have on a woman's life choices and her professional decision making is significant. In reality, little has changed since my experience of being a working mother thirty years ago. It is to be hoped that by the time Lily's daughter, Daisy, is ready to become a mother herself, that she will have benefitted from studies like mine, so that her lived reality is more accepting and empathetic of her position as a woman and a mother. Until then, today's working mothers, mothers like Lily, need to continue to walk their own paths and although initially, they may succumb to the fatigue and exhaustion of motherhood and allow it to cloud their perceptions for a short period of time, they must gradually reassert their power and fight back to assume their equal place in society (Kristeva, 2015). It may be, as Hillary Rodham Clinton (2014) suggests, "like pushing a boulder uphill everyday" but building on the foundations of women and mothers such as Friedan, Oakley, Rich, Sikes, Wolf and me, they will eventually reach the pinnacle of their endeavours and show the world, that being a happy

and contented mother can be synonymous with being a happy and contented professional woman. As Friedan (1963) anticipated, “Their strengths, their ability to learn, their confidence and joy in their work – is all part of being a woman now, part of female identity” (p.331) and motherhood, rather than being a moderating factor should be an influence for further personal and professional growth and liberation. Only when this is an approved universal concept will a mother’s return to paid employment no longer be considered ‘Premature Labour’.

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